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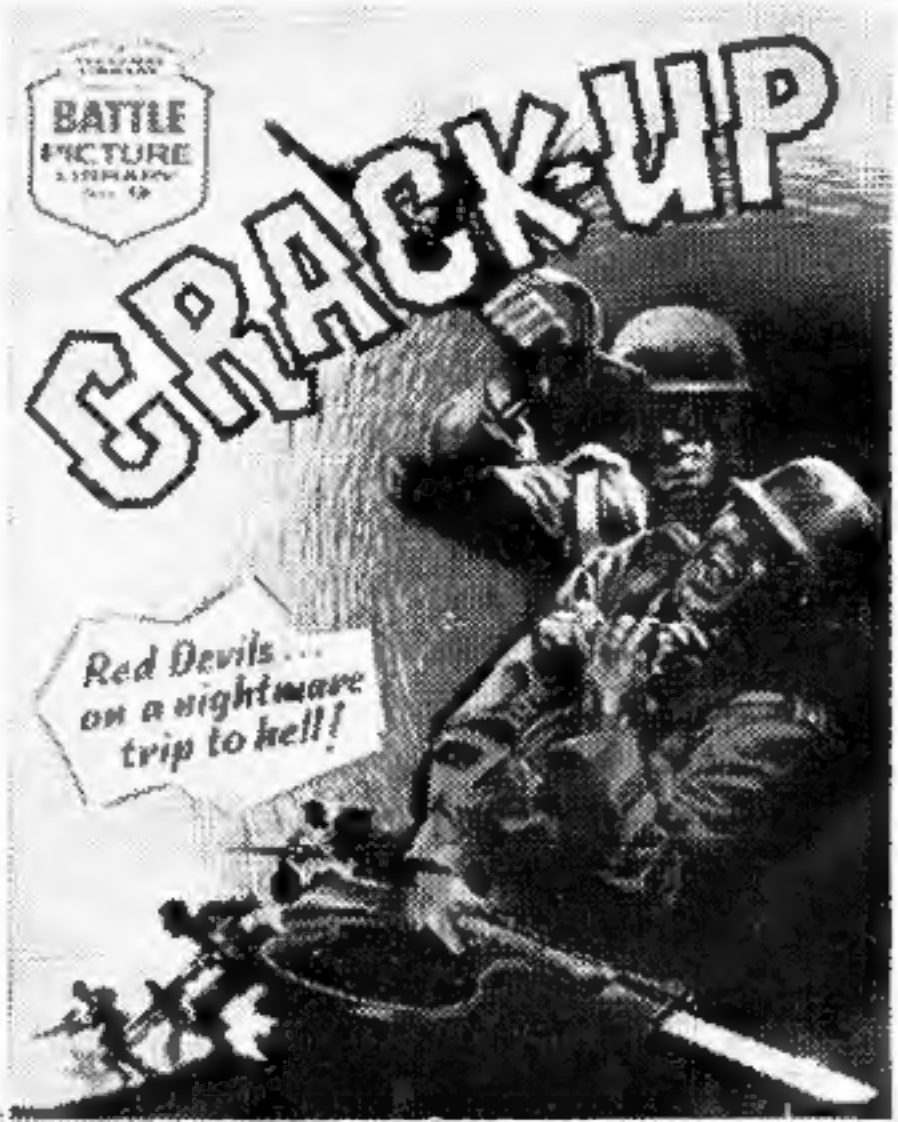

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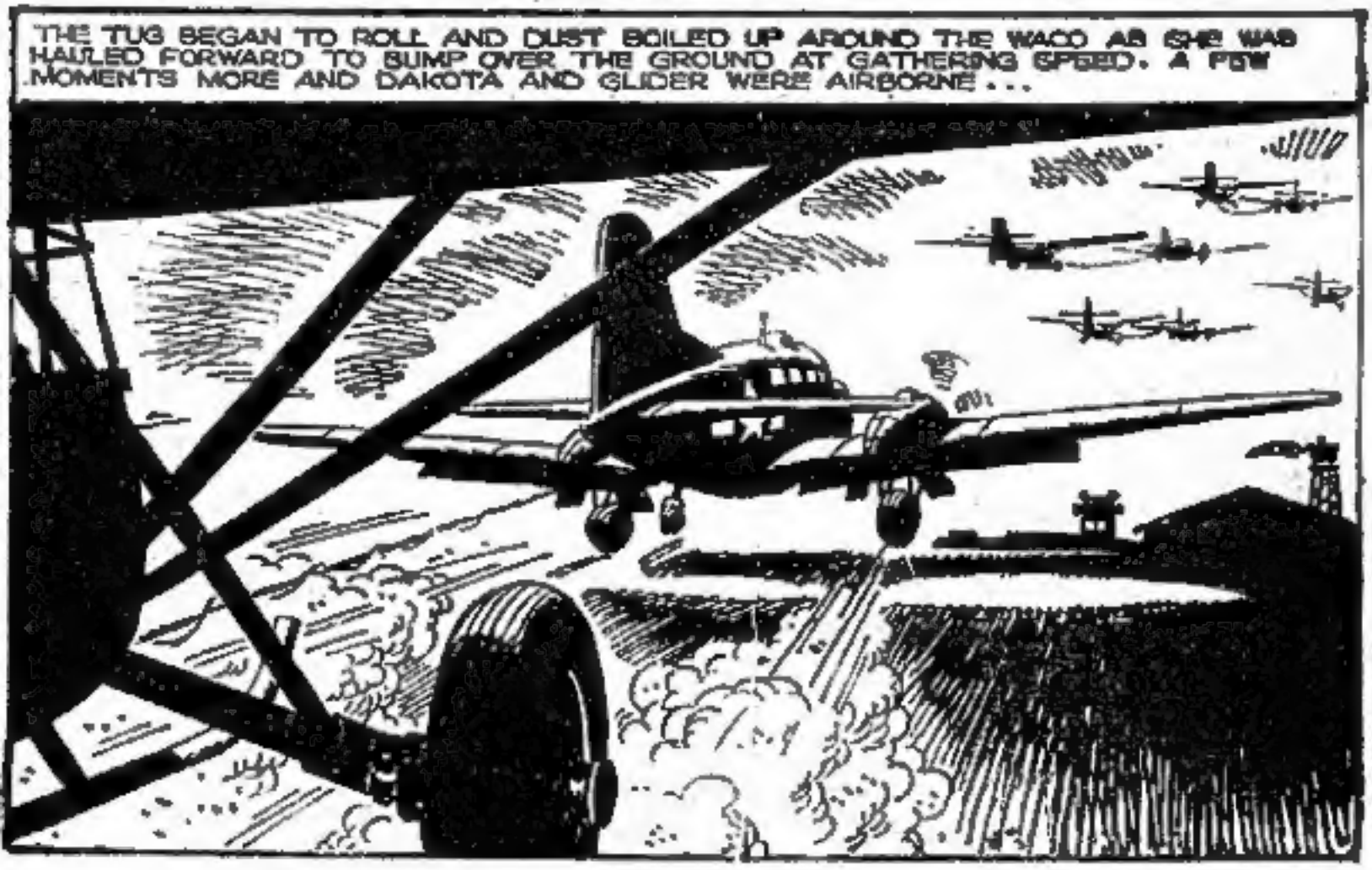
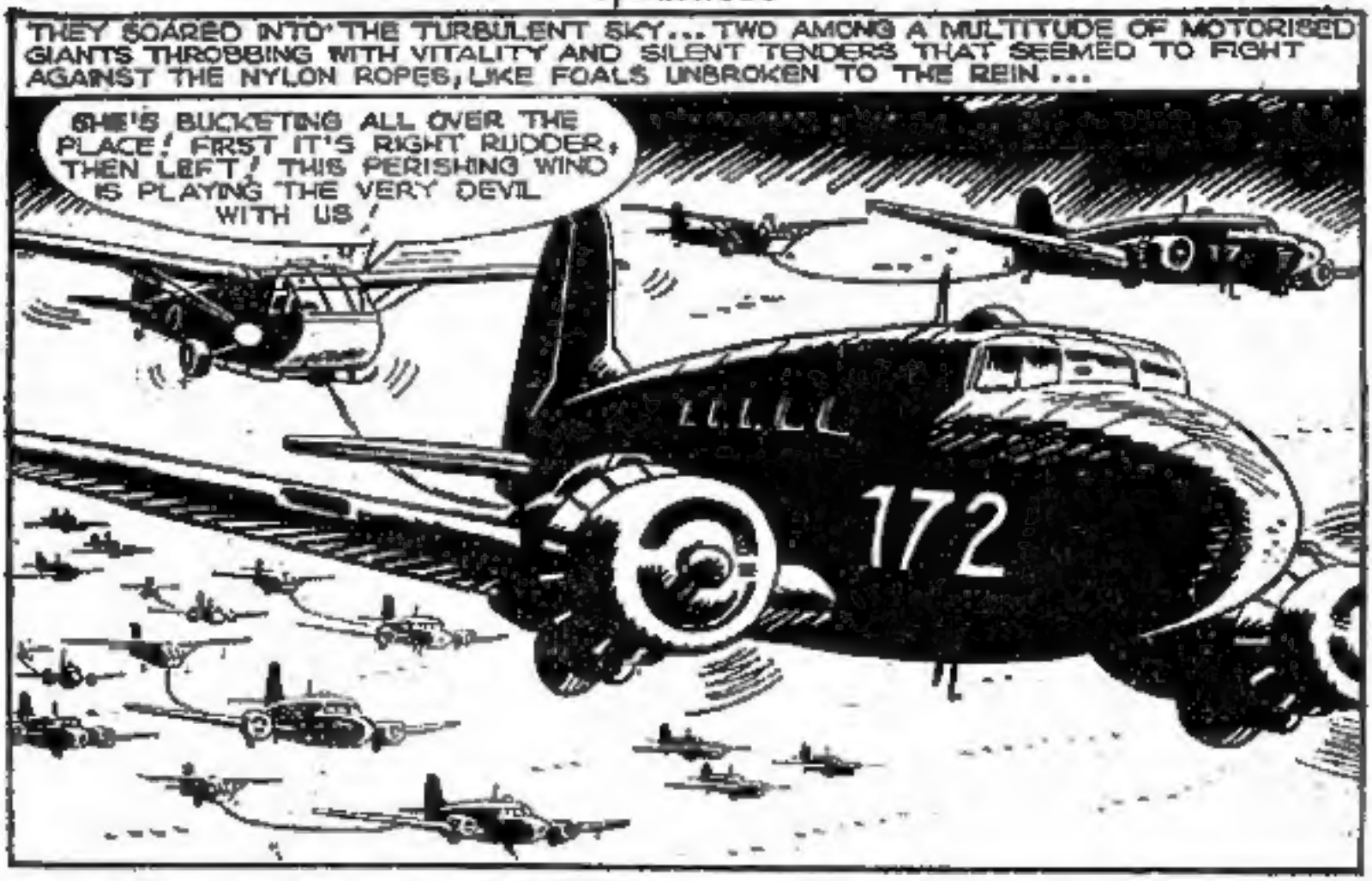
Chapter 1 SHORT DROP

THE WACO AND ITS DAKOTA TUG WERE LINED UP WITH OTHERS OF THEIR KIND ON A NORTH AFRICAN AIRSTRIP... ALL SET FOR THE INVASION OF SICILY...
I HOPE THE YANKS IN THE DAKOTAS DO A GOOD JOB. TO MY WAY OF THINKING, THEY HAVEN'T BEEN GIVEN ENOUGH INSTRUCTION AND REHEARSAL FOR A SPECIALISED JOB LIKE THIS.
AS PILOT OF THIS FLIMSY CONTRAPTION, I COULDN'T AGREE WITH YOU MORE!

THE TWO MEN OF THE GLIDER PILOT REGIMENT IN THE WACO'S NOSE WERE WORRIED.
THEN THERE'S THIS RELEASE-POINT THREE THOUSAND YARDS FROM THE SICILIAN COAST. I KNOW THE DAKOTA SKIPPERS ARE UNDER ORDERS TO AVOID FLAK AND TO WHISTLE RIGHT BACK FOR A SECOND AIRLIFT. BUT THREE THOUSAND YARDS!
IT'S A HECK OF A LONG APPROACH FOR US--

A TELEPHONIC LINK WAS PROVIDED BY A WIRE WRAPPED AROUND THE NYLON ROPE CONNECTING THE WACO WITH THE DAKOTA.
TIME TO ROLL / OKAY WITH YOU ALL IN THE WACO, FELLER?
THE GLIDER'S BRITISH PILOT RESPONDED TO THE CRISP VOICE...
YES. READY WHEN YOU ARE.


THE TUG BEGAN TO ROLL AND DUST BOILED UP AROUND THE WACO AS SHE WAS HAULED FORWARD TO BUMP OVER THE GROUND AT GATHERING SPEED. A FEW MOMENTS MORE AND DAKOTA AND GLIDER WERE AIRBORNE...


THEY SOARED INTO THE TURBULENT SKY... TWO AMONG A MULTITUDE OF MOTORISED GIANTS THROBBING WITH VITALITY AND SILENT TENDERS THAT SEEMED TO FIGHT AGAINST THE NYLON ROPES, LIKE FOALS UNBROKEN TO THE REIN ...
SHE'S BUCKETING ALL OVER THE PLACE! FIRST IT'S RIGHT RUDDER, THEN LEFT! THIS PERISHING WIND IS PLAYING THE VERY DEVIL WITH US!
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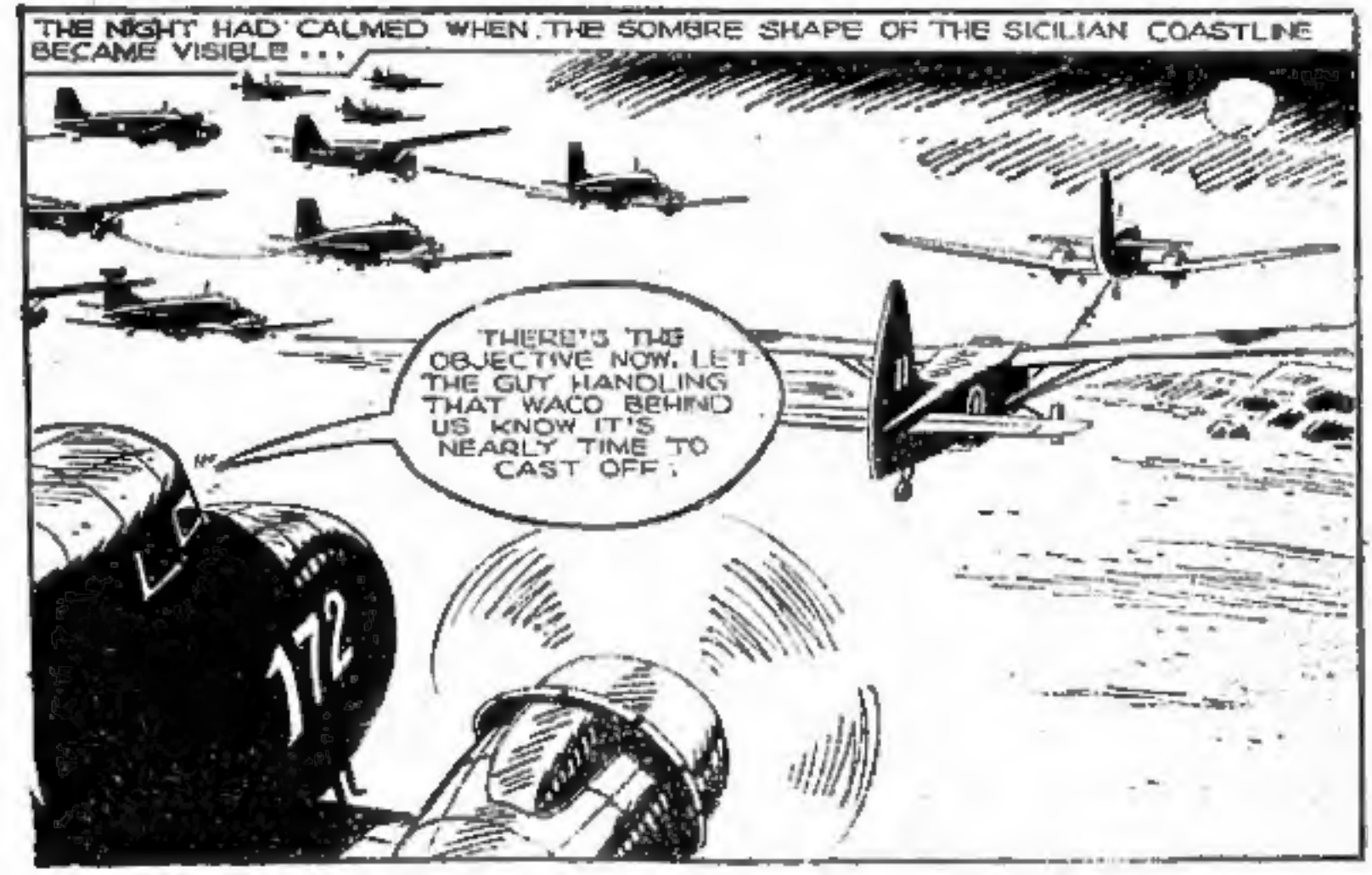
DARKNESS CLOSED IN, AND STILL THE GLIDERS CONTINUED TO TAKE A MERCILESS BUFFETING. SOMEWHERE BELOW, ESCORTED TROOP-SHIPS WERE BEARING OTHER MEN AND MATERIAL TOWARDS SICILY THROUGH HEAVY SEAS ...
I'M A ROTTEN SAILOR, BUT I'D RATHER BE DOWN THERE THAN UP HERE JUST NOW.
WHAT'S THE MATTER, CRAWFORD? AREN'T YOU ENJOYING THE RIDE?
WHAT MAKES YOUNG 'HAPPY' LAUDER TICK? COULD ANYTHING TAKE THAT SERENE LOOK OFF HIS PINK-AND-WHITE FACE? A GRAND KID... ONE OF THE BEST...

HAPPY LAUDER GRINNED INFECTIOUSLY . . .
I MUST SAY IT IS A BIT OF A BOUNCY TRIP, THOUGH. DON'T YOU THINK SO, SIR?
HAPPY, THAT'S THE UNDER-STATEMENT OF THE CENTURY!


THE NIGHT HAD CALMED WHEN THE SOMBRE SHAPE OF THE SICILIAN COASTLINE BECAME VISIBLE . . .
THERE'S THE OBJECTIVE NOW. LET THE GUY HANDLING THAT WACO BEHIND US KNOW IT'S NEARLY TIME TO CAST OFF!
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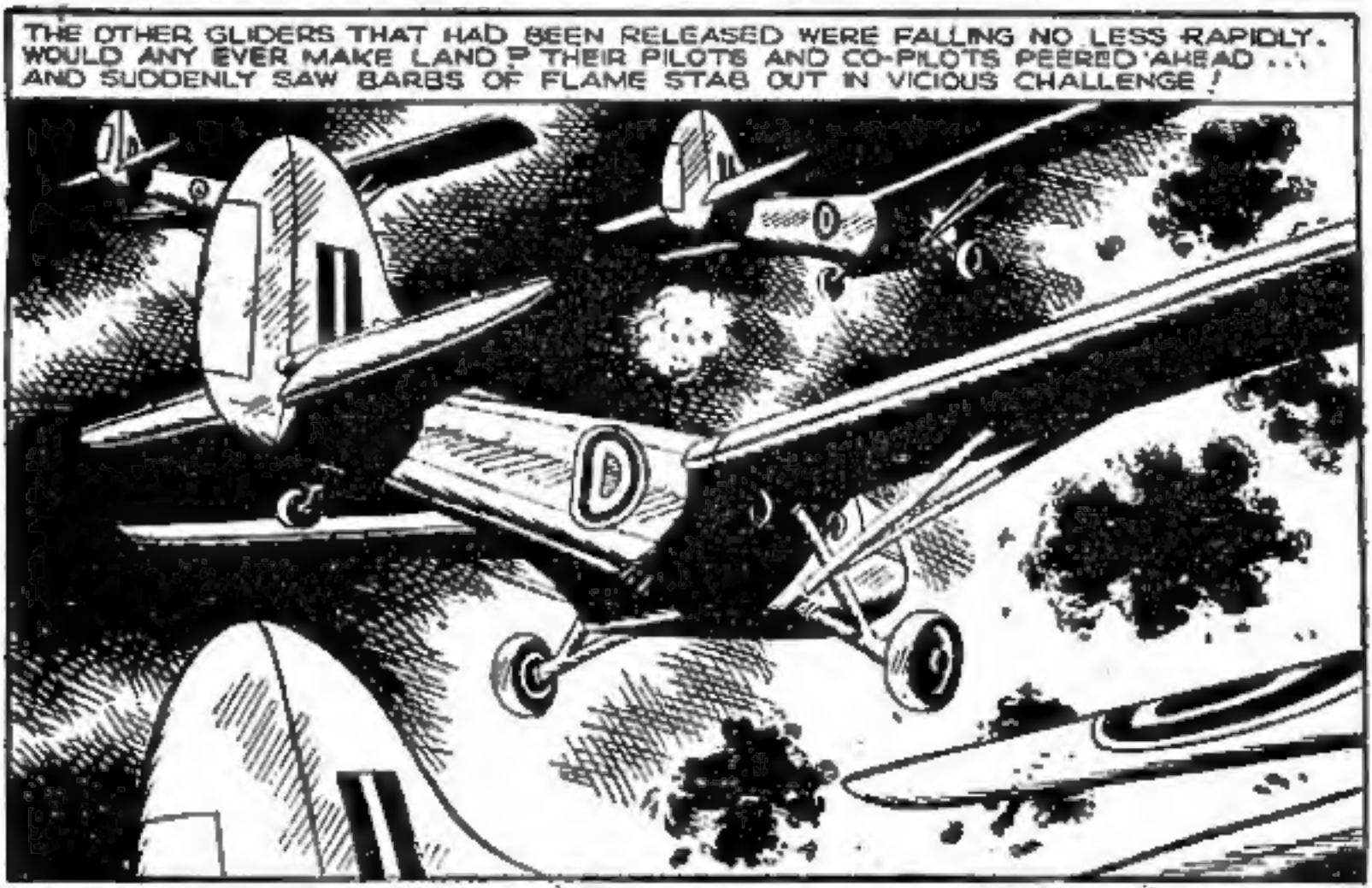
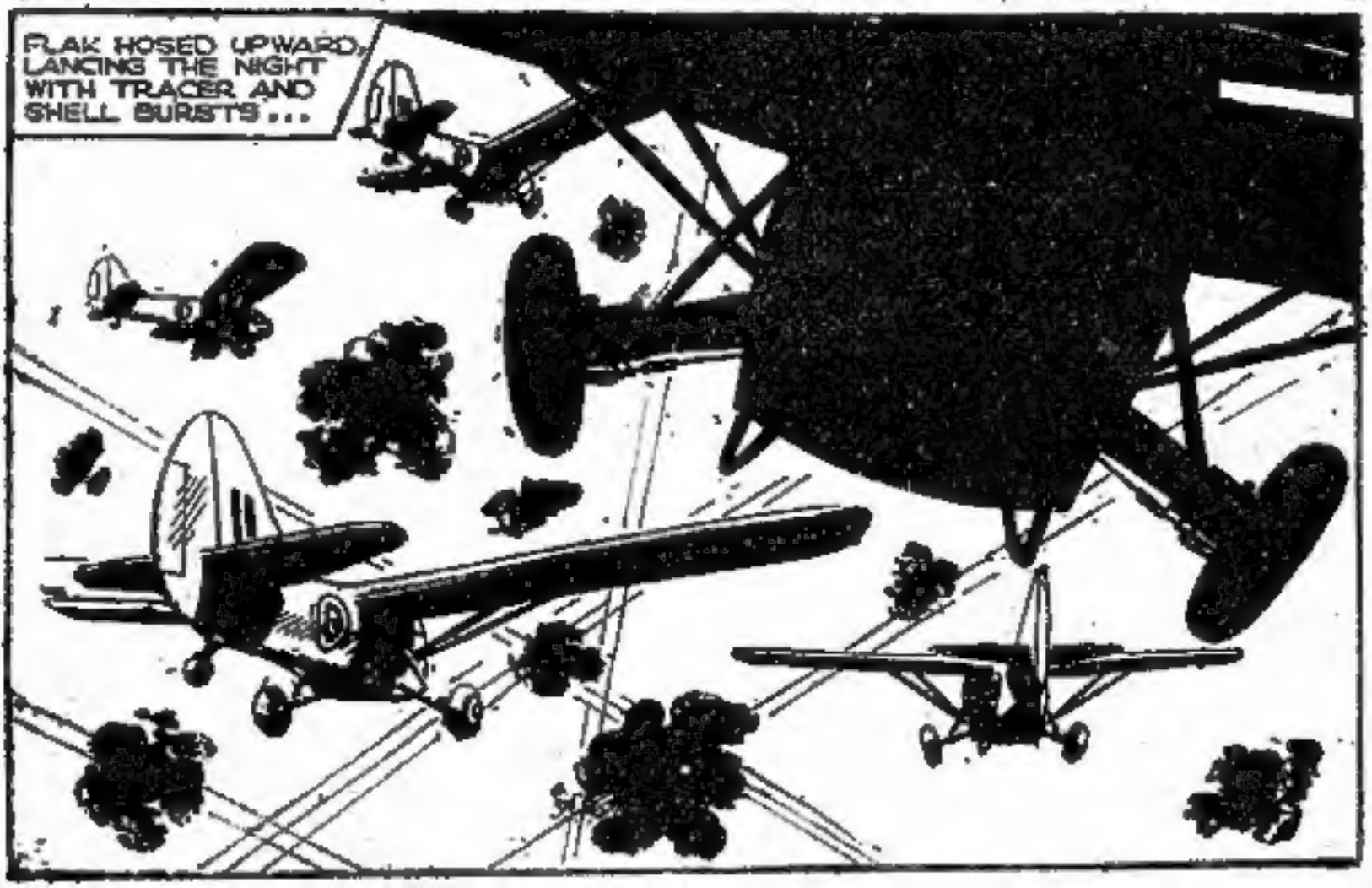
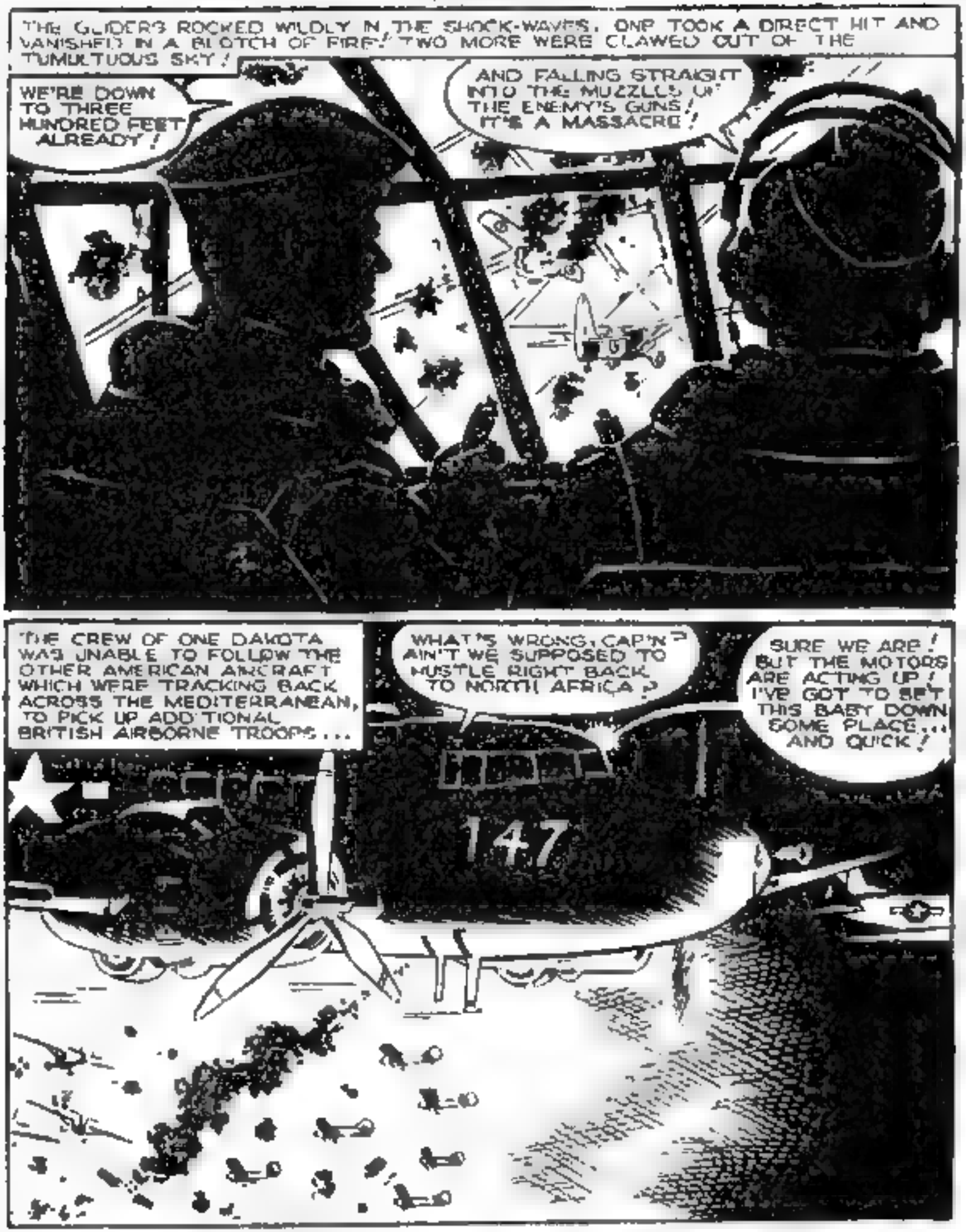
THE GLIDER PILOT PULLED THE RELEASE-LEVER. THERE WAS A JERK AND THE WACO WAS IN FREE FLIGHT . . .
ONE THOUSAND FEET . . . NINE HUNDRED . . . EIGHT HUNDRED . . . SEVEN HUNDRED . . .

THE CO-PILOT'S VOICE BECAME SHARP-EDGED WITH ANXIETY . . .
. . . SIX HUNDRED . . . AND STILL A LONG WAY TO GO ! I DON'T LIKE THIS ! WE'RE LOSING HEIGHT MUCH TOO FAST . . .


THE OTHER GLIDERS THAT HAD BEEN RELEASED WERE FALLING NO LESS RAPIDLY. WOULD ANY EVER MAKE LAND ? THEIR PILOTS AND CO-PILOTS PEERED AHEAD . . . AND SUDDENLY SAW BARBS OF FLAME STAB OUT IN VICIOUS CHALLENGE !

SICILY'S SOUTHERNMOST DEFENCES HAD COME ALIVE. NAZI EIGHTY-EIGHTS HAMMERED AT THE NOISELESS ARMADA WHICH WAS APPROACHING. ITALIAN BATTERIES ADDED THEIR BLUSTER -- MANNED BY CREWS WHO WERE RELUCTANT ALLIES OF THE GERMAN REICH ...
GET THIS GUN INTO ACTION! HURRY, CONFOUND YOU! SCANNELL!


FLAK HOSED UPWARD, LANCING THE NIGHT WITH TRACER AND SHELL BURSTS ...


THE GLIDERS ROCKED WILDLY IN THE SHOCK-WAVES. ONE TOOK A DIRECT HIT AND VANISHED IN A BLOTCH OF FIRE! TWO MORE WERE CLAWED OUT OF THE TUMULTUOUS SKY!
WE'RE DOWN TO THREE HUNDRED FEET ALREADY!
AND FALLING STRAIGHT INTO THE MUZZLES OF THE ENEMY'S GUNS! IT'S A MASSACRE!
THE CREW OF ONE DAKOTA WAS UNABLE TO FOLLOW THE OTHER AMERICAN AIRCRAFT WHICH WERE TRACKING BACK ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN, TO PICK UP ADDITIONAL BRITISH AIRBORNE TROOPS...
WHAT'S WRONG, CAP'N? AIN'T WE SUPPOSED TO HUSTLE RIGHT BACK TO NORTH AFRICA?
SURE WE ARE! BUT THE MOTORS ARE ACTING UP! I'VE GOT TO SET THIS BABY DOWN SOME PLACE... AND QUICK!
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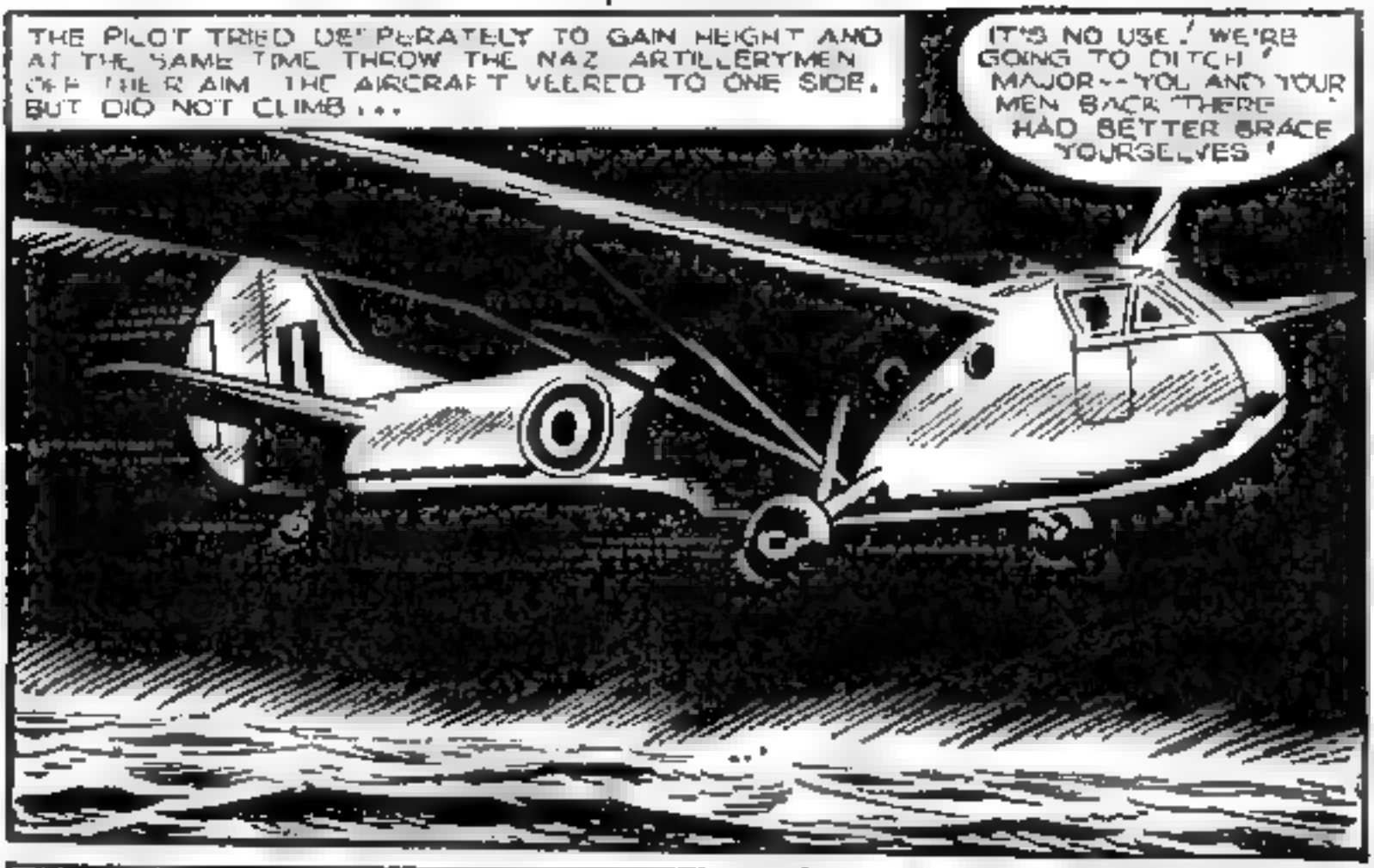
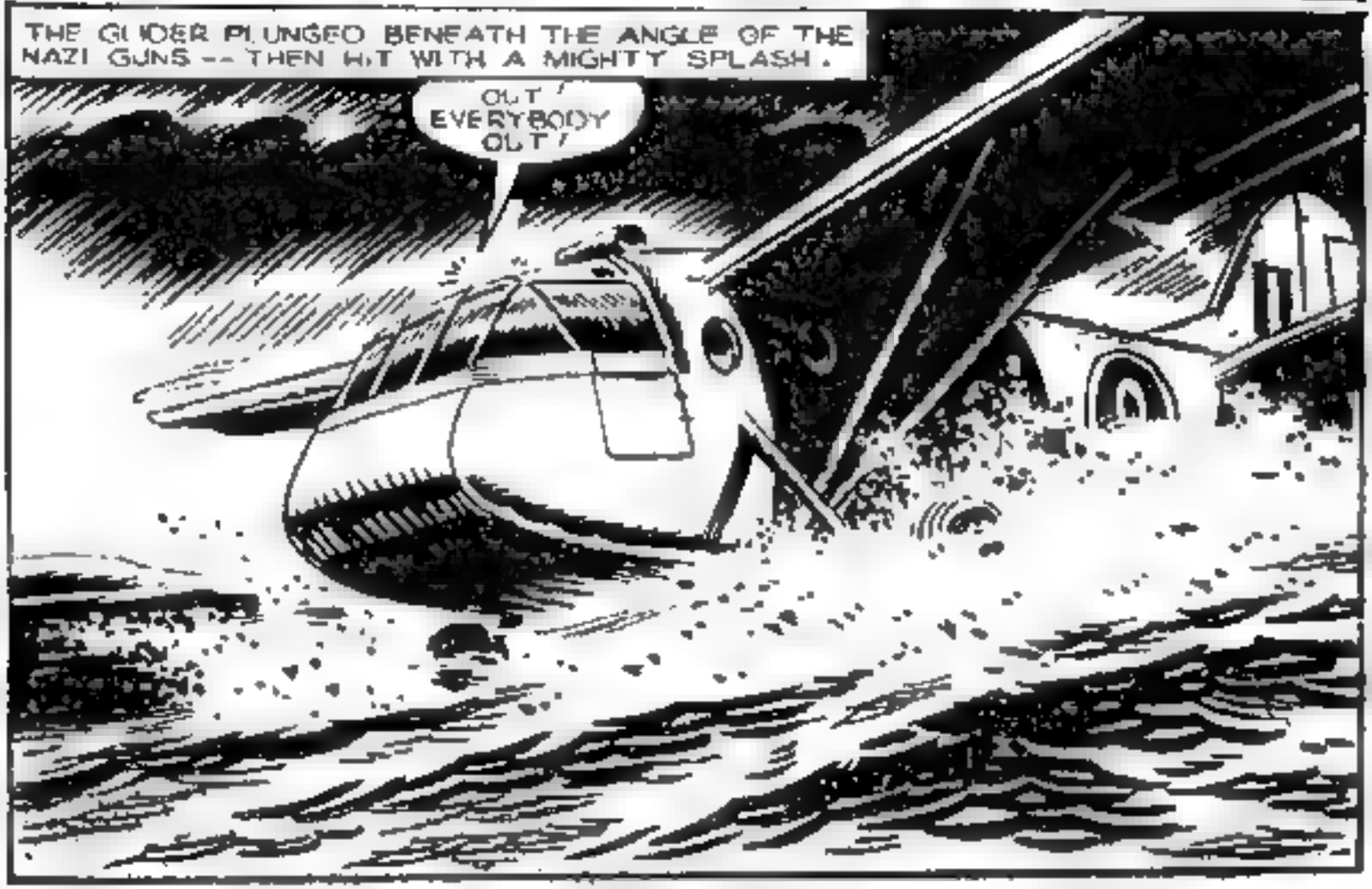
AWAY BELOW, THE WACO OCCUPIED BY JIM DAWSON AND HIS PARTY WAS NOW IN THE FOREFRONT OF THE INVASION FORCE A GERMAN EIGHTY-EIGHT LATCHED ON TO HER
TRAVERSE LEFT! LEFT! HALT! DEPRESS, DEPRESS... FEUER!

PILOT AND CO-PILOT OF THE WACO FROZE AS THEY SPOTTED THE MUZZLE-FLASH AT POINT-BLANK RANGE. THEY EVEN HEARD THE CRACK OF THE REPORT...

...AND THEN THE SCREAM OF A SHELL THAT FAILED TO FIND ITS MARK...
GREAT SCOTT! HOW DID THOSE GUNNERS MISS?
THEY FLAPPED! BUT IF THEY GET ANOTHER CRACK THEY'LL BLOW US OUT OF THE SKY!


THE PILOT TRIED DESPERATELY TO GAIN HEIGHT AND AT THE SAME TIME THROW THE NAZI ARTILLERYMEN OFF THEIR AIM. THE AIRCRAFT VEERED TO ONE SIDE, BUT DID NOT CLIMB...
IT'S NO USE! WE'RE GOING TO DITCH! MAJOR--YOU AND YOUR MEN BACK THERE HAD BETTER BRACE YOURSELVES!


THE GLIDER PLUNGED BENEATH THE ANGLE OF THE NAZI GUNS -- THEN HIT WITH A MIGHTY SPLASH.
OUT! EVERYBODY OUT!

JIM DAWSON WAS QUICK TO REACT TO THE PILOT'S SHOUT. SNATCHING OUT A FIGHTING-KNIFE THAT WAS PART OF HIS EQUIPMENT, HE HACKED AT THE ROOF OF THE FUSELAGE.
COME ON, LADS! UP YOU GO!
HE HOISTED ONE OF HIS MEN THROUGH THE RENT HE HAD MADE IN THE AIRCRAFT'S SKIN. OTHERS WERE MANHANDLED ALOFT IN DOUBLE QUICK TIME.
GET WEAVING! THERE IS NOT A SECOND TO LOSE!
YOU NEXT, SAUNDERS! HOP TO IT!

THE GLIDER WAS WALLOWING OMINOUSLY, BUT THERE WAS NO PANIC. JIM WAS LAST TO EMERGE -- AS BEFITTED HIS RANK...

HURRY, MAJOR! SHE'LL GO UNDER ANY MINUTE!

THE SHORE WAS A HUNDRED AND FIFTY YARDS OFF AND JIM DAWSON AND HIS FELLOW PARATROOPERS WERE LOADED DOWN WITH FIGHTING-KIT. BUT THEY WERE IN NO WORSE PLIGHT THAN MANY OTHERS IN THE BATTALION. GLIDERS WERE THUMPING INTO THE SEA ALL AROUND...

WHAT A SHAMBLES! IF THE TANKS HAD ONLY CARRIED ON A LITTLE CLOSER WE'D HAVE BEEN HOME AND DRY!

THOSE WORDS REGISTERED WITH JIM. HE MISINTERPRETED THEM, TAKING THEM TO MEAN THAT THE AMERICAN FLYERS WERE WHOLLY TO BLAME FOR WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO THE BATTALION
THERE'S ONE DAKOTA THAT WON'T GET BACK TO BASE, THOUGH, FROM THE SOUND OF HER ENGINES
SHE MUST BE IN TROUBLE! IF SHE WASN'T, HER PILOT WOULD HAVE BEEN OFF LIKE A SCALDED CAT AS SOON AS THE FLAK STARTED UP— ALONG WITH THE REST OF 'EM!

THERE WAS NO TIME FOR JIM TO DIRECT MORE THAN A BRIEF AND BAFFLED GLANCE AT THE U.S. PLANE THAT WACO WAS SUBMERGING.
WE'VE GOT TO SWIM FOR IT! IF ANY OF YOU FIND YOURSELVES IN DIFFICULTIES, SING OUT!

THE STACCATO CHATTER OF A MACHINE-GUN BIT THROUGH THE POUNDING UPROAR OF THE ACK-ACK BATTERIES ON THE CLIFFS. A STREAM OF SILVER BRIGHT SLUGS STIPPLED OUTWARD FROM THE SHADOWED BEACH.
YOU HEARD THE MAJOR! IN YOU GO, CHAPS!

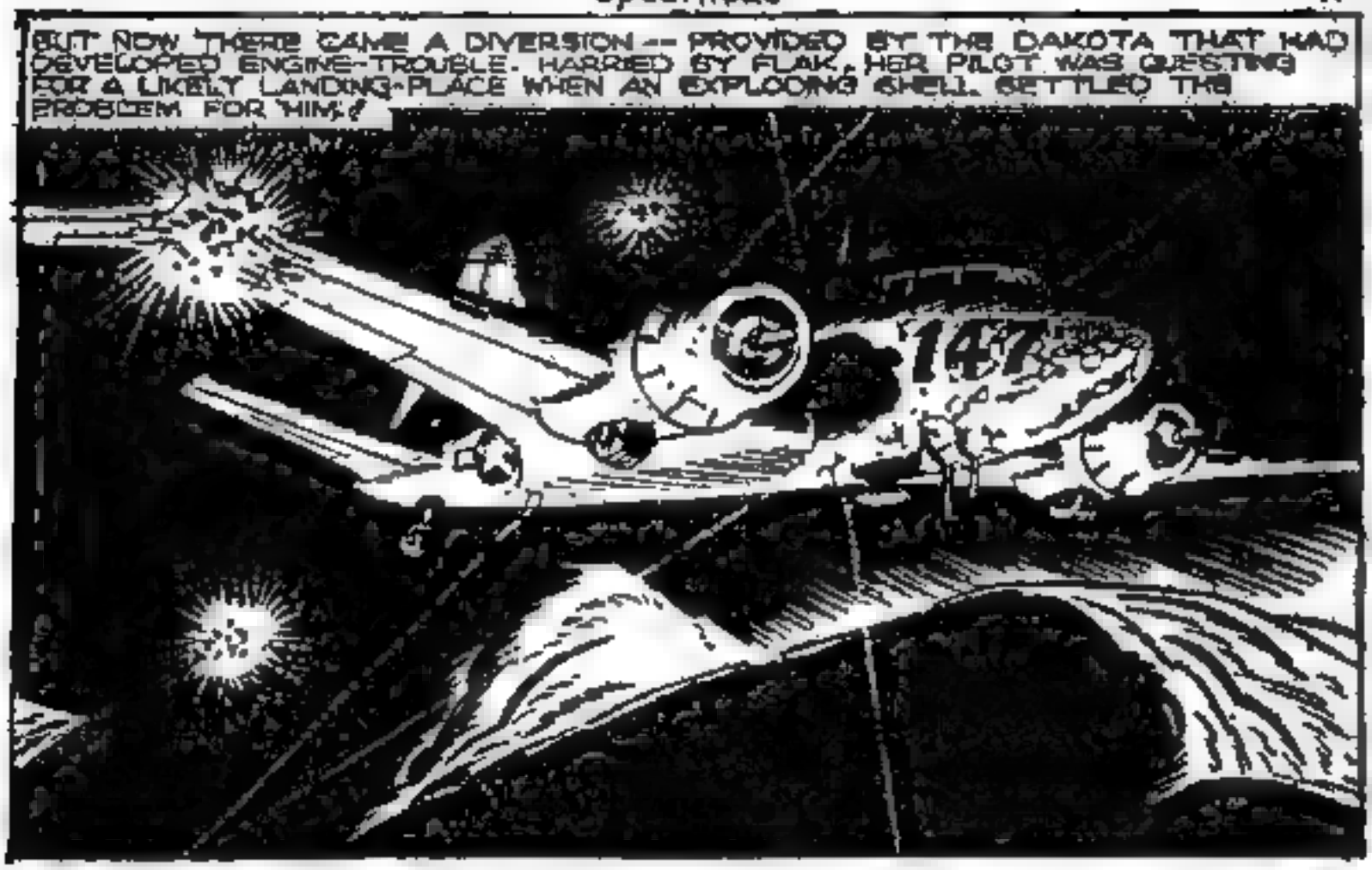
Chapter 2. MASSACRE

BAFFLED BY THE MURK AND THE BUOYANCY OF HIS OWN MAE WEST, JIM SURFACED TO FIND HIMSELF WELL TO THE REAR OF THE OTHERS. AND REALISED THAT THE SPANDAU WAS MERCILESSLY PICKING THEM OFF...

IN THE NEXT FEW SECONDS THE REST OF HIS COMRADES DIED IN A THRASHING RAIN OF BULLETS. HE EXPECTED THE MACHINE-GUN TO FIX ON HIM THEN, BUT HE MUST HAVE GONE UNNOTICED, FOR IT TURNED ON ANOTHER DITCHED GLIDER...
I'LL GET THOSE SO-AND-SO'S IF IT'S THE LAST THING I EVER DO!

OVERHEAD, THE SOLITARY DAKOTA WAS STILL CIRCLING AMONGST THE GLIDERS. SOME OF THESE WERE LUCKY ENOUGH TO SKIM SAFELY OVER THE CLIFFS, BUT ONE DID NOT QUITE MAKE IT . .
OTHERS PANCAKED IN THE SHALLOWS WHERE THE SURF PROTHED ON THE BEACHES, MEN SPILLED OUT OF THEM TO COME UNDER SMALL-ARMS FIRE FROM RIFLES AND LIGHT MACHINE-GUNS . . .
AAAH! I'VE COPPED ONE!

MEANWHILE, JIM DAWSON HAD STRUGGLED TO THE SHORE, HIS HARD EYED STARE FASTENED ON ONE PARTICULAR MACHINE GUN THAT WAS CONTINUING TO RAKE THE SEA . . .
IT WAS A SPANDAU, AND THE MEN BEHIND IT WERE GAINING THE MAXIMUM PLEASURE OUT OF THEIR MURDEROUS TASK . . .
SUPPOSING YOU LET ME DO SOME OF THE SHOOTING, KARL? I'D LIKE TO PICK OFF SOME OF THOSE BRITISHERS MYSELF!
LATER, HEINRICH . . LATER!


BUT NOW THERE CAME A DIVERSION -- PROVIDED BY THE DAKOTA THAT HAD DEVELOPED ENGINE-TROUBLE. HARRIED BY FLAK, HER PILOT WAS GUESSING FOR A LIKELY LANDING-PLACE WHEN AN EXPLODING SHELL SETTLED THE PROBLEM FOR HIM!
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WITH HER STARBOARD WING IN TATTERS THE DAKOTA STARTED DOWN IN A WHIRLWIND SPIRAL. SOMEHOW THE FLYER WHO WAS HANDLING HER MANAGED TO PULL HER OUT OF THAT CORKSCREW PLUNGE. SOMEHOW HE CONTRIVED TO TRIM HER AND PLANT HER SQUARELY -- BANG ON THE BEACH!
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UNLUCKILY, HER LANDING-GEAR FOULED A SNAG OF ROCK AND BROKE UP UNDER THE IMPACT. SHE PLOWED TO A JARRING HALT IN A CLOUD OF SAND. HER CREW COLLECTED THEMSELVES—TUMBLED INTO VIEW. BULLETS PECKED THE SAND ALL ABOUT THEM...
A KRAUT MACHINE GUN! MAKE FOR COVER!

THE NAZI BEHIND THE SPANDAU DROPPED HIS AIM A SHADE. AND THAT WAS WHEN JIM DAWSON BURST INTO VIEW, WITH A MILLS 36 IN ONE FIST AND VENGEANCE BLAZING UP IN HIM...
ACHTUNG, KARL!

THE SPANDAU'S BARREL TRAVERSED SMARTLY... BUT NOT SMARTLY ENOUGH. JIM LOBBED THE THIRTY-SIX AND IN THE SAME MOMENT HURLED HIMSELF DOWN. A SQUIRT OF TRACER SCORCHED ABOVE HIM -- JUST AS THE GRENADE DROPPED PLUMB INTO THE SLIT WHERE THE GERMANS CROUCHED...

THE MACHINE-GUN NEST WAS WIPED OUT...

M CLIMBED TO HIS FEET AND THE AMERICANS ROSE WITH HIM. THE DAKOTA'S PILOT SPOKE FEELINGLY...
THANKS A MILLION, PAL! IF YOU HADN'T PITCHED THAT FIRECRACKER WHEN YOU DID, THOSE KRAUTS WOULD HAVE HAD US FOR SURE. WE CERTAINLY OWE YOU A...

A SPASM OF EMOTION CONTORTED JIM DAWSON'S FEATURES...
YOU DON'T OWE ME A THING, YANK! I DIDN'T PUT THOSE JERRIES OUT OF BUSINESS TO SAVE YOUR PRECIOUS SKINS! I DID IT FOR A LOT OF GOOD MEN YOU AND YOUR KIND HAVE HELPED TO KILL!

HE SHOULDERED PAST THE STARTLED AMERICANS, AND DOUBLED ALONG THE BEACH TO WHERE THE SURVIVORS OF THE BATTALION WERE ENGAGING ENEMY STRONGPOINTS
WHAT GOT INTO HIM?
THE GUY MUST BE NUTS!

THE WORLD KNOWS WHAT HAPPENED THAT NIGHT. AS SPEARHEAD OF THE INVASION, THE SICILY AIR-DROP WAS A TRAGIC AND COSTLY FAILURE. TRUE, IT WAS RETRIEVED BY THE SUCCESS OF THE MAIN DRIVE..
I DIDN'T EXPECT TO SEE PARATROOPERS HERE! I THOUGHT YOU FELLOWS WERE MILES AWAY
SO WE WOULD BE, IF THE TANKS HADN'T MESSED EVERYTHING UP! AS IT WAS, WE WERE CUT TO RIBBONS! THE JERRIES ONLY PULLED OUT WHEN THE SEABORNE FORCES STARTED TO ARRIVE..
ENEMY RESISTANCE WILTED UNDER A MOUNTING ALLIED OFFENSIVE. THE FIGHTING IN SICILY WAS AT AN END WHEN IM WAS ORDERED TO REPORT TO HIS BRIGADE COMMANDER
DAWSON, I HEAR YOU'VE AN OUTSIZE CHIP ON YOUR SHOULDER AS FAR AS THE AMERICANS ARE CONCERNED. NOW, IS IT JUSTIFIED..?
YOU WOULDN'T ASK THAT QUESTION, SIR, IF YOU HAD SEEN WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BATTALION THAT I'D HELPED TO TRAIN. IT'S AT LESS THAN COMPANY STRENGTH NOW, WITH ONE SOLITARY OFFICER - MYSELF

ALL RIGHT, DAWSON. I'LL SAY NO MORE ON THE SUBJECT. BUT WE'RE TO CONTINUE IN CLOSE CO-OPERATION WITH THE AMERICANS IN AN ASSAULT ON THE ITALIAN MAINLAND. THEREFORE, I THINK YOU MIGHT BE THE VERY MAN FOR A POSTING TO A THEATRE OF WAR A VERY LONG, LONG WAY FROM HERE.
SICILY

THE BRIGADIER HAD BEEN ASKED TO RECOMMEND A CANDIDATE FOR A VACANCY IN THE FAR EAST ...
IF YOU'RE INTERESTED, I'LL PUT YOUR NAME FORWARD. IT WOULD MEAN PROMOTION -- TO THE COMMAND OF AN AIRBORNE BATTALION OPERATING WITH THE FOURTEENTH ARMY ON THE INDIA-BURMA FRONTIER... AGAINST THE JAPS..
THAT SUITS ME, SIR. WON'T BE SORRY TO LEAVE THE MED— NOT WITH SO MANY AMERICANS AROUND. I FEEL I LIKE GOING BERSERK EVERY TIME I CLAP EYES ON ONE!

Chapter 5. SKY-HIGH COMMANDO

WEEKS LATER, STUFFED FULL OF VACCINES, JUST FINDING HIS FEET AS A BATTALION-COMMANDER, LIEUTENANT-COLONEL JIM DAWSON WAS SUMMONED FROM THE BURMA FRONTIER AREA TO A CONFERENCE IN DELHI, INDIA...

HERE IS LIEUTENANT-COLONEL DAWSON, SIR.

I'M GENERAL MILLAR. WELCOME TO THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE JOINT PLANNING STAFF, DAWSON. OUR LITTLE GATHERING'S COMPLETE NOW EXCEPT FOR COLONEL GORDON BUT AS HE'S ALREADY IN THE PICTURE WE CAN GET DOWN TO THE PRELIMINARIES WITHOUT HIM.

THE CONFERENCE WAS ABOUT A DARING PLAN TO DELIVER AN AIRBORNE ASSAULT AGAINST A LOCALITY DEEP BEHIND THE JAPANESE LINES...

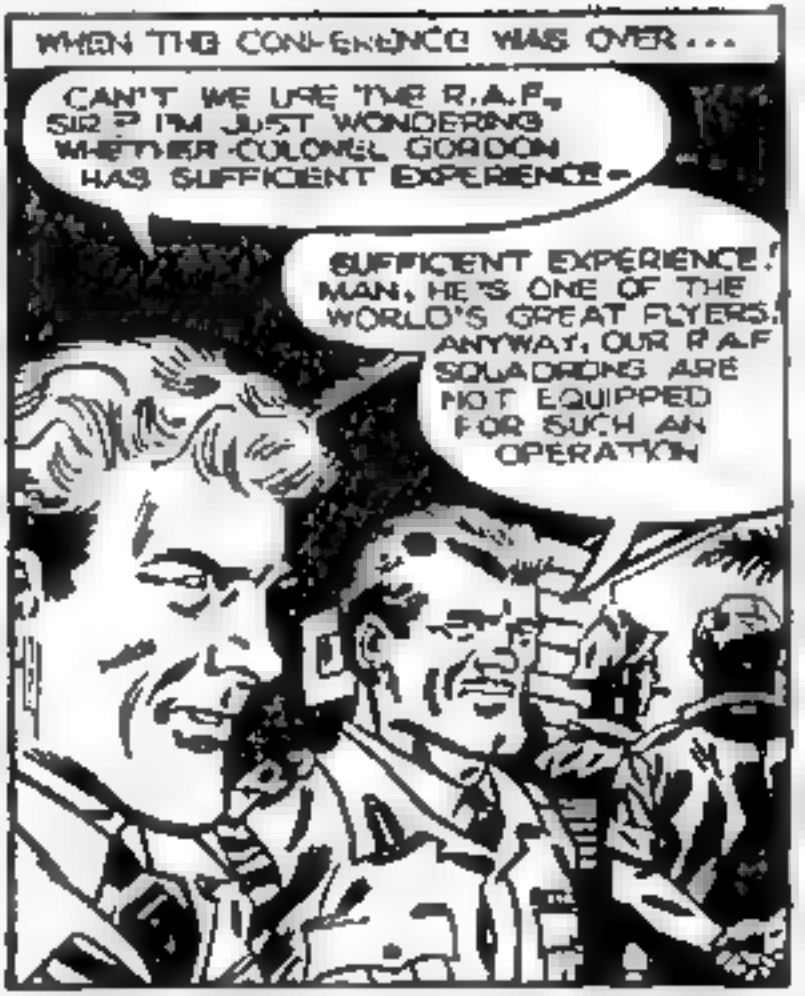
THE PRIMARY TASK IS TO OCCUPY A PARTICULAR JUNGLE-CLEARING WHICH CAN BE ADAPTED TO OUR NEEDS--AS AN AIRSTRIP. I'LL GIVE *YOU* ITS MAP-REFERENCE LATER, DAWSON, FOR YOU'LL BE OUT ON A LIMB THERE--FIGURATIVELY SPEAKING

THE GENERAL EYED JIM PENETRATINGLY...
YOURS WILL BE THE TOUGHEST JOB OF THE CAMPAIGN COLONEL DAWSON YOU AND YOUR MEN WILL BE DROPPED ON THAT CLEARING — YOU WILL SEIZE IT AT ALL COSTS THERE WILL BE NO RETREAT FOR YOU — AND THERE MUST BE NO SURRENDER
THERE WAS A DETERMINED THRUST TO THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT-COLONEL'S JAW...
WHATEVER ELSE HAPPENS, SIR, I CAN PROMISE YOU MY UNIT WILL NEVER SURRENDER AS LONG AS I'M ALIVE TO COMMAND IT. YOU CAN COUNT ON THAT.
GOOD NOW, LISTEN. WHILE YOU'RE BEATING OFF THE JAPS, SPECIALIST TECHNICIANS AND ENGINEERS WILL TRANSFORM THE CLEARING INTO A LANDING-GROUND SUITABLE FOR COPING WITH A MASSIVE FLY-IN.
THERE WAS ONE POINT THAT HAD BEEN PUZZLING J.M. NO OFFICER REPRESENTING THE AIR FORCE WAS THERE AND NONE APPEARED TO BE EXPECTED...
AIRSTRIP FACILITIES WILL HAVE TO BE PROVIDED FOR THE BUILD-UP OF AN ENTIRE DIVISION — TO MASS IN THE ENEMY'S REAR WHILE OTHER DIVISIONS ATTACK ALONG THE FRONT
I TAKE IT I'LL HAVE AMPLE OPPORTUNITY BEFOREHAND TO DISCUSS THE ACTUAL DROP WITH THE SENIOR PILOT...

JIM DID NOT FINISH THE SENTENCE. A CHARACTER IN FLYING KIT HAD BREEZED INTO THE ROOM, BRUSHING ASIDE A PRM STAFF CAPTAIN WHO TRIED TO ANNOUNCE HIM
SAVE IT, HELLER. I DON'T NEED NO INTRODUCTION. EV'BODY KNOWS ME HERE..
NOT QUITE EVERYBODY, GORDON
JIM LOOKED ROUND. HE SAW A BIG FELLOW - BIG AS HIMSELF...WITH A BOLD AND FLARING EYE. A MAN CLEARLY AS IMPATIENT OF FORMALITIES AS HE WAS CARELESS OF PERSONAL APPEARANCE...
I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET DAWSON, OF THE PARATROOPERS, GORDON LIEUTENANT COLONEL DAWSON - COLONEL BRETT GORDON, UNITED STATES ARMY AIR FORCE
HIYA, DAWSON!

JIM ALMOST FORGOT WHERE HE WAS. HE NEVER QUITE KNEW HOW HE MANAGED TO RESTRAIN HIMSELF IN THAT MOMENT.
SORRY I'M LATE, GENERAL. BUT I'VE BEEN SENDING OUT SIGNALS RIGHT, LEFT AND CENTRE TO ROUND UP THE FINEST-EVER AIR CIRCUS FOR THIS JUNGLE JUNKET YOU'RE COOKING UP
OH, NO! NOT ANOTHER COMBINED EFFORT WITH THE YANKS! HASN'T MILLAR HEARD WHAT HAPPENED OVER THE MED?
IT WAS HARD FOR THE PARATROOP BATTALION-COMMANDER TO GIVE HIS UNDIVIDED ATTENTION TO ALL THAT FOLLOWED.
I TELL YOU, GENERAL, I'VE GOT THE SASSIEST BUNCH OF FLYERS THE U.S.A.A.F. CAN MUSTER. I'LL FORM 'EM INTO A SORT OF COMMANDO — A SKY-HIGH COMMANDO.
THAT SOUNDS FINE, BUTCH..
AS SURE AS MY NAME'S DAWSON, THIS OPERATION WILL BE ANOTHER UNHOLY FLOP! I FEEL IT IN MY BONES!

BUTCH GORDON WAS CLEARLY HELD IN HIGH ESTEEM BY THE GENERAL, BUT HE CUT NO ICE WITH JIM ...
EVEN IF I HADN'T SAMPLED THE AMERICANS ALREADY, I'D HAVE NO FAITH IN THAT SLOPPILY-DRESSED LOUD-MOUTH! AIR CIRCUS — JUNGLE-JUNKET — SKY-HIGH COMMANDO! I ASK YOU!


WHEN THE CONFERENCE WAS OVER ...
CAN'T WE USE THE R.A.F., SIR? I'M JUST WONDERING WHETHER COLONEL GORDON HAS SUFFICIENT EXPERIENCE —
SUFFICIENT EXPERIENCE! MAN, HE'S ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREAT FLYERS! ANYWAY, OUR R.A.F. SQUADRONS ARE NOT EQUIPPED FOR SUCH AN OPERATION

RIGHT ENOUGH, BUTCH GORDON WAS A GREAT FLYER. FALSE MODESTY DID NOT STOP HIM FROM SAYING SO HIMSELF; ON THE OTHER HAND, NO MISGUIDED VANITY PREVENTED HIM FROM SEEING HIS OWN SHORTCOMINGS ...
WERE YOU REALLY A STUNT MAN IN HOLLYWOOD BEFORE THE WAR, BUTCH?
THE BEST! I COULD PICK A POCKET-HANDKERCHIEF OFF THE GROUND WITH MY WING-TIP. I MAY BE A LOUSY SOLDIER — BUT, BOY, I'M THE TOPS WHEN IT COMES TO JOCKEYING A PLANE AROUND ...

THAT WAS THE MAN WITH WHOM JIM DAWSON HAD TO KEEP IN TOUCH DURING THE WEEKS OF PREPARATION AND SPECIALISED TRAINING THAT FOLLOWED. THEY DID NOT EXACTLY HIT IT OFF...
WELL, IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE MY FLYING COMMANDO UNIT'S UP TO STRENGTH. I HAD TO PULL A LOT OF STRINGS TO GET THE GUYS I WANT, BUT MOST OF 'EM ARE HERE NOW.
I'M TOLD THEY'RE ALL ONE-TIME BUSH PILOTS AND AERIAL ACROBATS AND THE LIKE, GORDON. I HOPE THEY'RE NOT AS SLAP HAPPY AS THEY SOUND.
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THE COLDNESS OF THE ENGLISHMAN'S TONE AND THE INFERENCE BEHIND HIS WORDS NEEDLED BUTCH.
DAWSON, GUYS THAT GO IN FOR AEROBATICS CAN'T AFFORD TO BE SLAP-HAPPY. NEITHER CAN BUSH PILOTS. THEY TAKE ON CHORES TOO DIRTY FOR ANYBODY ELSE TO TACKLE!

THE MEMORY OF THE SICILY BEACHES AND ITS COST IN HUMAN LIVES AND SUFFERING WAS STILL HAG RIDING JIM WHEN HE AND HIS MEN EMPLANED FOR THE BURMESE AIR-DROP...
LOOK AT THOSE TWO YANK PILOTS, ADJ. THEY LOOK AS THOUGH THEY JUST COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT THIS WHOLE BUSINESS.
THIS TIME, THOUGH, JIM AND HIS MEN WOULD BE PARACHUTING INTO ACTION...
I THOUGHT COLONEL GORDON WAS TO PILOT OUR PLANE, SIR.
NO. UNDERSTAND HE DECIDED TO COMMAND THE GLIDER FORMATION THAT'S FOLLOWING UP WITH THE YANKEE ENGINEERS AND THEIR EQUIPMENT. HE PROBABLY THINKS THEY'RE MORE IMPORTANT THAN WE ARE.

IN LEISURELY FASHION, THE PILOT AND CO-PILOT OF THE LEADING DAKOTA BOARDED THEIR AIRCRAFT. A FEW MINUTES LATER SHE ROARED OVER THE RUNWAY WITH THE DUST SWIRLING UP PAST THAT GRINNING DOORWAY IN HER FLANK...
BY THUNDER! THE C.O. HATES THESE AMERICANS LIKE POISON. I SHOULDN'T LIKE TO HEAR HIS COMMENTS IF THEY DROP US IN THE WRONG PLACE.
THE REST OF THE DAKOTAS TOOK OFF AT THIRTY-SECOND INTERVALS CLIMBING, THEY SWUNG INTO FORMATION AND BORE EASTWARD FOR THE BURMESE HILLS...
NOW WE WAIT FOR THE DAKOTAS TO COME BACK AND LIFT US AL I HOPE IS THAT THE LIMEYS'LL KEEP THE NIPS OFF OUR NECKS WHEN WE SET DOWN IN THE CLEARING WHERE THE AIRSTRIP'S TO BE LAID!
170

MOUNTAIN PEAKS LOOMED AGAINST THE RISING SUN IN JAGGED ARRAY RESEMBLING MONSTROUS FANGS — ABOVE THEM, A STRIP OF LURID SKY WAS TOPPED BY PILED-UP CUMULUS CLOUD. FLYING TOWARDS THEM WAS LIKE HEADING INTO A DRAGON'S MOUTH, OPEN IN A BARE-TOOTHED SNARL AND BREATHING FIRE AND BRIMSTONE ...

THE FORMATION CROSSED THE HILLS AND FLEW ONWARD ABOVE AN IMMENSITY OF JUNGLE, DARKLY GREEN. AT LAST A TINY RED LIGHT GLOWED BY THE DOOR OF THE LEADING PLANE
ON YOUR FEET! HOOK UP TO THE CABLE!

THE PARATROOPERS STOOD WAITING WITH STOMACH-MUSCLES KNOTTED UP IN TENSION, AS ALWAYS BEFORE A JUMP ..
THAT'S THE CLEARING ALL RIGHT. AT LEAST THESE YANKS SEEM TO HAVE BROUGHT US CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE TARGET-- WHICH IS MORE THAN JERRY AND CRONIES OVER THE MEDITERRANEAN DID. BUT THEN THERE'S NO FLAK HERE ...

THE LIGHT CHANGED TO GREEN. JIM FEELGE OFF. THE OTHERS FOLLOWED IN SWIFT ROTATION
WHAT THE DEVIL'S GOING ON? WE'RE BEING WHIRLED AROUND LIKE SHUTTLECOCKS! THOSE TANKS MUST HAVE DROPPED US IN THE MIDDLE OF A CYCLONE!
IT WAS NO CYCLONE, BUT A PHENOMENON PECULIAR TO THAT AREA ON OCCASION... A WAYWARD, GUSTY WIND WHICH SOMETIMES SWIRLED THROUGH THE UPPER AIR WITH COMPLETE UNEXPECTEDNESS AND THE PARATROOPERS' PLIGHT WAS SEEN BY NARROWED EYES BELOW.
LOOK, CAPTAIN TAGAKI! ENEMY PARACHUTISTS!
THEY APPEAR TO BE IN DIFFICULTIES! THAT SHOULD MAKE IT EASY FOR US TO DEAL WITH THEM!

Chapter 4. TEAM-WORK

BUT THERE WERE OTHERS IN HIS BATTALION WHO HAD FAILED TO CONTEND WITH THE DEADLY FREAKISHNESS OF THE WIND AND FELL AMONGST THE ENEMY

HERE COMES A PACK OF THE LITTLE HEATHENS! LET 'EM HAVE IT, MATES!

SHOOTING BROKE OUT AT INNUMERABLE POINTS IN THE CLEARING, [illegible] PARTIES WERE QUICKLY FORMED--AND THESE LINGED THROUGH THE THICKETS TO DELIVER HARD-PRESSED COMRADES FROM A MERCILESS ENEMY

THERE'S FIVE OF OUR LADS NOW AND THEY'RE REALLY UP AGAINST IT! COME ON FOLLOW ME!

AT THE HEAD OF ONE SUCH SCRATCH SQUAD, JIM SINGLED OUT THE JAPANESE OFFICER IN COMMAND OF AN ENEMY PATROL.
OI, ENGLISHMAN! DIE BY THE HAND OF CAPTAIN ITAGAKI! BANZAI!
ITAGAKI'S VICTORY-YELL WAS A TRIFLE PREMATURE AND WHEN HE SWITCHED TO HIS SWORD, JIM LET FLY...
AAAARGH!
THE JAPANESE CAPTAIN FELL. ANOTHER MOMENT AND THE PARATROOPERS WERE RAMPAGING INTO THE THICK OF THE OPPOSITION!

THE JAPS FOUGHT BACK, BUT NOT FOR LONG. THOSE OF THEM WHO SURVIVED THE SKYMEN'S ONSLAUGHT FLED IN DISORDERLY FASHION.

SOMEWHERE TO THE LEFT, THE THUMP OF RIFLES AND THE STUTTER OF AUTOMATICS TOLD OF ANOTHER SKIRMISH. THE PARATROOP BATTALION'S R.S.M. WAS FORAYING IN THE DIRECTION OF IT WITH A PARTY HE HAD MUSTERED...
LOOK AT THAT FOUL LIMB OF SATAN! HE'S GOING TO BAYONET THAT LAD IN THE TREE!

THE REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR BOUNDED FORWARD LIKE A GREYHOUND FROM A TRAP AS HE SAW THE JAP START TO THRUST AT HIS HELPLESS VICTIM WITH THE COLD STEEL . . .

TERROR BY NAME, A HOLY TERROR BY NATURE. A VETERAN WITH A VOICE LIKE A THUNDER CLAP THAT WAS THE R.S.M. . . THE LADS LOATHED HIM AND WORSHIPPED HIM!

THE JAP WENT DOWN UNDER A SMASHING BLOW FROM THE R.S.M.'S RIFLE BUTT WITHIN SECONDS, OTHERS OF HIS BREED WERE CLUTTERING UP THE TRACK IN LIFELESS HEAPS . .

IN SCORES OF SIMILAR ISOLATED ACTIONS THE YELLOW MEN WERE BEATEN OFF.
AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL, THE JAPS HAVE PULLED RIGHT OUT. GRIFFITHS, I WANT YOU AND THESE OTHER MEN TO ACT AS RUNNERS AND CONTACT MY SECOND IN-COMMAND, ALL COMPANY COMMANDERS AND THE ADJUTANT. FETCH THEM HERE FOR A CONFERENCE.

AN HOUR LATER. THE SUCCESS SIGNAL WAS SENT BY RADIO -- AND WAS CONVEYED IN DUE COURSE TO BUTCH GORDON
THE PARATROOPERS HAVE SEALED OFF ALL APPROACHES TO THE TARGET AREA ACCORDING TO PLAN, SIR!
GOOD. YOU HEAR THAT FELLERS — IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE WE'RE ON OUR WAY
USAF

IT WAS EARLY AFTERNOON WHEN THE GLIDER-FORCE WAS RELEASED FOR ITS DESCENT ON THE CLEARING. THE MOTORLESS AIR-FLEET SAILED IN UNERRINGLY...
...WACOS PACKED WITH U.S. PERSONNEL, HORSAS WITH JEEPS AND LIGHT EQUIPMENT, HAMILCARS WITH BULL-DOZERS AND HEAVY STORES...

JIM MADE A POINT OF BEING ON HAND TO LINK UP WITH GORDON... NOT THAT HE HAD ANY GREAT WISH TO SEE HIM
I THOUGHT I'D BETTER SHOW YOU WHERE I'VE ESTABLISHED MY BATTALION HEADQUARTERS.
OKAY, DAWSON. BUT HANG ON, WATCH HOW FAST WE GET TO WORK ON TURNING A JUNGLE CLEARING INTO AN AIRSTRIP.

A BULLDOZER RUMBLED IMPORTANTLY OUT OF A NEARBY HAMILCAR, GROWLED ITS WAY DOWN A RAMP... AND SO ELECTED TO A SORRY, BOGGED-DOWN STANDSTILL IN A PATCH OF SWAMPY GROUND . .
WHAT IN TARNATION D'YOU THINK THIS IS, SERGEANT SCHENK? A DOGGONED SUBMARINE?
SO MUCH FOR THE YANKS AND THEIR METHODS! WHEN IT COMES TO DOING A JOB, GIVE ME BRITISH BRAWN AND THE GOOD OLD PICK AND SHOVEL
USMC

IM'S DERISIVE AMUSEMENT WAS ARRUPTLY INTERRUPTED BY THE CHATTER OF BRITISH BRENS AND JAP LIGHT MACHINE GUNS, INTERMINGLING IN STACCATO AND VENOMOUS DISPUTE . . .

THE ENEMY IN THE AREA HAD RALLIED AND MOUNTED A SHARP ATTACK ON A NARROW FRONT. IT WAS REPULSED, BUT WAS FOLLOWED BY A SERIES OF PROBING THRUSTS. NO WONDER JIM BRISTLED WHEN BUTCH CAME TO HIM WITH A REQUEST FOR HELP.
ABOUT THIS AIRSTRIP, DAWSON. THE TECHNICIANS AND ENGINEERS SHOULD MANAGE PER CENT OF THE JOB CAN BE DONE BY MECHANISATION. BUT THEY'LL NEED TO DRAW ON YOUR GUYS FOR A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF MANUAL LABOUR--
WHAT'S THAT? COLONEL GORDON, I'M IN COMMAND OF SOLDIERS... NOT NAVVIES!

JIM STALKED OFF, SEETHING AT THE THOUGHT OF THOSE AMERICANS FUSSING AROUND IN THE RELATIVE SECURITY OF THE CLEARING WHILE HIS PARATROOPERS HAZARDED LIFE AND LIMB TO PROTECT THEM FROM THE JAPS... AS FOR BUTCH, HE STALKED OFF AS WELL...
THOSE TECHNICIANS AND ENGINEERS CAN DO THEIR OWN DIRTY WORK! MY LADS HAVE THEIR HANDS FULL AND I'M ON MY WAY NOW TO A SECTOR WHERE A BIG THREAT'S DEVELOPING, SO LET'S HEAR NO MORE ABOUT MANUAL LABOUR!
WELL, I'LL BE DOGGONED! WE TEAM UP WITH THE BRITISH SO THEY CAN STAGE A MAJOR OFFENSIVE, AND THIS IS THE THANKS WE GET! STILL, MAYBE IT WAS A FOOL TIME TO ASK FOR HELP...

WHEN HE REACHED THE CLEARING, U TOH WA[illegible] THE SITUATION ALTOGETHER FROM JIM'S POINT OF VIEW. THE RUMBUSTIOUS FLYER FAIRLY BAWLED AT HIS FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN ...
I WANT EVERYBODY OVER HERE AT THE DOUBLE! ENGINEERS, TECHNICIANS, GLIDER-PILOTS—EVERYBODY! AND BRING YOUR HARDWARE!
BRITISH PARATROOPERS ARE FIGHTING TO KEEP THE NIPS AWAY FROM US. OKAY, I KNOW THAT'S THEIR JOB, BUT ...
WE GET YOU, COLONEL! SAY THE WORD AND WE'LL MUSCLE-IN ON THAT SCRAP ALONGSIDE THE LIMEYS.
GUESS THAT GOES FOR US LIKEWISE, SIR! AFTER ALL, WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE COMBAT ENGINEERS.

A MOBILE COLUMN WAS SPEEDILY FORMED. THE LEADING ELEMENTS OF IT TRAVELLED IN JEEPS AND ARRIVED ON THE THREATENED SECTOR AT A CRITICAL MOMENT...
BY GOLLY, THOSE NIPS ARE ALL SET TO BUST THROUGH!

BECAUSE THE PARATROOPERS WERE CONFINED TO A STATIC ROLE, THE JAPS HAD RECOVERED THE INITIATIVE. NOW IT LOOKED AS IF THEY MUST TEAR A GAP IN THAT SYSTEM...
BANZAI!

THEY FORCED THEIR WAY THROUGH THE BRITISH POSITIONS. BUT THEIR TRIUMPH WAS SHORT-LIVED, FOR A DOUBLE-BOSCHE COUNTER-ATTACK STOPPED THEM DEAD IN THEIR TRACKS!
THE HUNS!! WHERE THE DICKENS DID THEY SPRING FROM?

JIM WAS AT THE HEAD OF A RESERVE COMPOSED OF HIS BATTALION H.Q. STAFF. IT MAY HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT TO DEAL WITH THE BREAK-THROUGH. MAYBE NOT... BUT THE JEEP-LOADS OF AMERICANS PUT THE ISSUE BEYOND ALL DOUBT!

BUTCH GORDON COULD NOT RESIST TAKING THE CREDIT FOR THE ROUT OF THE JAPS
I ALLOWED YOU WHITS MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO MEASURE UP TO WHAT WAS EXPECTED OF YOU GUNNERS, SO I BROUGHT THE BOYS ALONG
IS THAT SO? WELL, SOME OF THEM ARE GOING TO RUN INTO TROUBLE IF THEY GO HARING OFF INTO THE JUNGLE THAT WAY. THE JAPS WILL TURN AND BUTCHER THEM TO A MAN.
YOU'RE RIGHT, SIR. I'LL CALL 'EM BACK

THE AMERICAN NON-COM RAISED A SHOUT BUT IT DID NOT HAVE THE SLIGHTEST EFFECT. REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR TERRY'S SLANTED A WITHERING GLANCE AT HIM - THEN ...
HALT! BACK HERE AT THE DOUBLE, THOSE MEN! YES, I MEAN YOU, YOU TRICKER HAPPY SO-AND SO'S!

THE PURSUING AMERICANS HAD PULLED UP AT THE FIRST INKLING OF THE N.S.M.'S VOLLEY. THEIR WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SURPRISED IF THE JAPS HAD PULLED UP AS WELL!
I DON'T THINK WE COULD HAVE MANAGED TO WHIP THOSE JAPS BY OURSELVES, BUT I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU JUST THE SAME. PERHAPS WE COULD GO DEEPER INTO THAT QUESTION OF PROVIDING MANUAL LABOUR FOR RE ARMING

Chapter 5. CURTAIN of FIRE.

THERE WAS CO-OPERATION BETWEEN PARATROOPERS AND AMERICANS FROM THEN ON.

THAT'S A NIP RECONNAISSANCE PLANE UP THERE— WHICH MEANS WE CAN EXPECT TROUBLE FROM THE AIR BEFORE LONG

I'LL PUT THROUGH A WIRELESS CALL TO BASE, MAYBE THE R.A.F. CAN LAY ON FIGHTER PATROLS.

BUTCH GORDON ON HIS PART PLACED HIS GROUNDED "CIRCUS" OF GLIDER PILOTS UNDER JIM'S COMMAND. THE BATTALION QUARTERMASTER WAS ABLE TO PROVIDE THEM WITH RIFLES AND STENS, WITH WHICH THEY WERE SOON REASONABLY PROFICIENT ...

SUFFERING CATFISH! THAT WAS CLOSE! THERE MUST BE A SNIPER AROUND SOMEWHERES!

YOU SAID IT! AND I'VE SPOTTED HIM!

A JAPANESE MARKSMAN WAS LOCATED IN A TREE OVERLOOKING A SECTOR FOR WHICH THE U.S. AIRMEN HAD BEEN MADE RESPONSIBLE. HE DID NOT STAY THERE LONG . .
AAARGH!
IN OTHER RESPECTS, THE SOLDIERLY DEFICIENCIES OF THOSE FORMER BUSH-PILOTS AND STUNT-ARTISTS WERE PAINFULLY CLEAR AT THE OUTSET.
IT'S SO DARK NOW, I CAN'T SEE A BLAMED THING. BUT I SWEAR I HEARD MOVEMENTS OUT THERE.
I THOUGHT I DID TOO. D'YOU S'POSE WE'VE GOT NIPS ON THE PROWL IN FRONT OF US? OR COULD THEY BE BRITISH?
THERE'S A GOOD WAY TO FIND OUT. GIVE 'EM A HAIL AND SEE WHETHER THEY COME UP WITH THE PASSWORD

THE TROUBLE WAS, NONE OF THEM COULD RIGHTLY REMEMBER THE PASSWORD. THEN A VOICE CALLED OUT TO THEM IN ENGLISH AND PUT THEIR MINDS AT REST..
DON'T SHOOT! WE ARE FRIENDS!
OKAY, PALS. COME ON IN.
THE OWNER OF THE VOICE AND O HERS WITH HIM ADVANCED BOLDLY UNSEEN TILL THEY WERE ALL TOO CLOSE. THE AMERICANS WERE WATCHING THEIR APPROACH AMIABLY, UNCONCERNEDLY, WHEN THE G.I.COM ERUPTED FLAME AND HOT LEAD!
THEY'RE JAPS! WE'VE BEEN PLAYED FOR SUCKERS!

THE FORWARD POSITIONS WERE OVERRUN, BUT PARATROOPERS WERE SOON ON THE SPOT, STORMING UP FROM RESERVE . . .
"LEM'S LIKE THE YANKS HAVE BEEN CAUGHT OFF-GUARD!

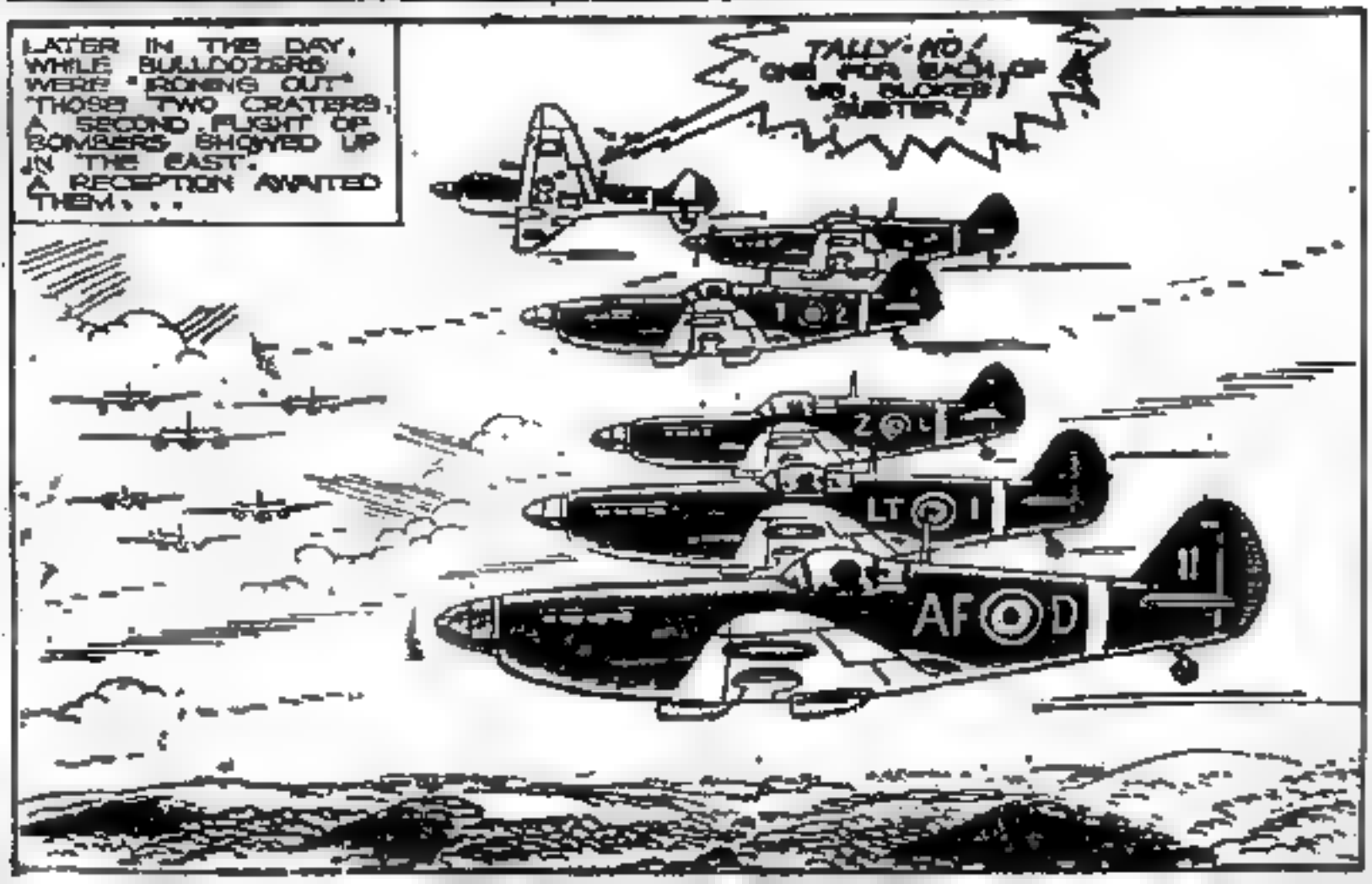
THE FORMIDABLE JAPANESE FIGHTING-PATROL WAS ROUTED.
WE'LL HAVE TO MAKE DARNED CERTAIN WE DON'T FALL FOR NO MORE TRICKS LIKE THE ONE THOSE NIPS PULLED TONIGHT!

NEXT DAY, IT WAS THE TURN OF THE AMERICANS ON THE AIRSTRIP TO FEEL THE WEIGHT OF JAPANESE ATTACK...
JAP BOMBERS! GIT UNDER COVER, FELLERS!
U.S.

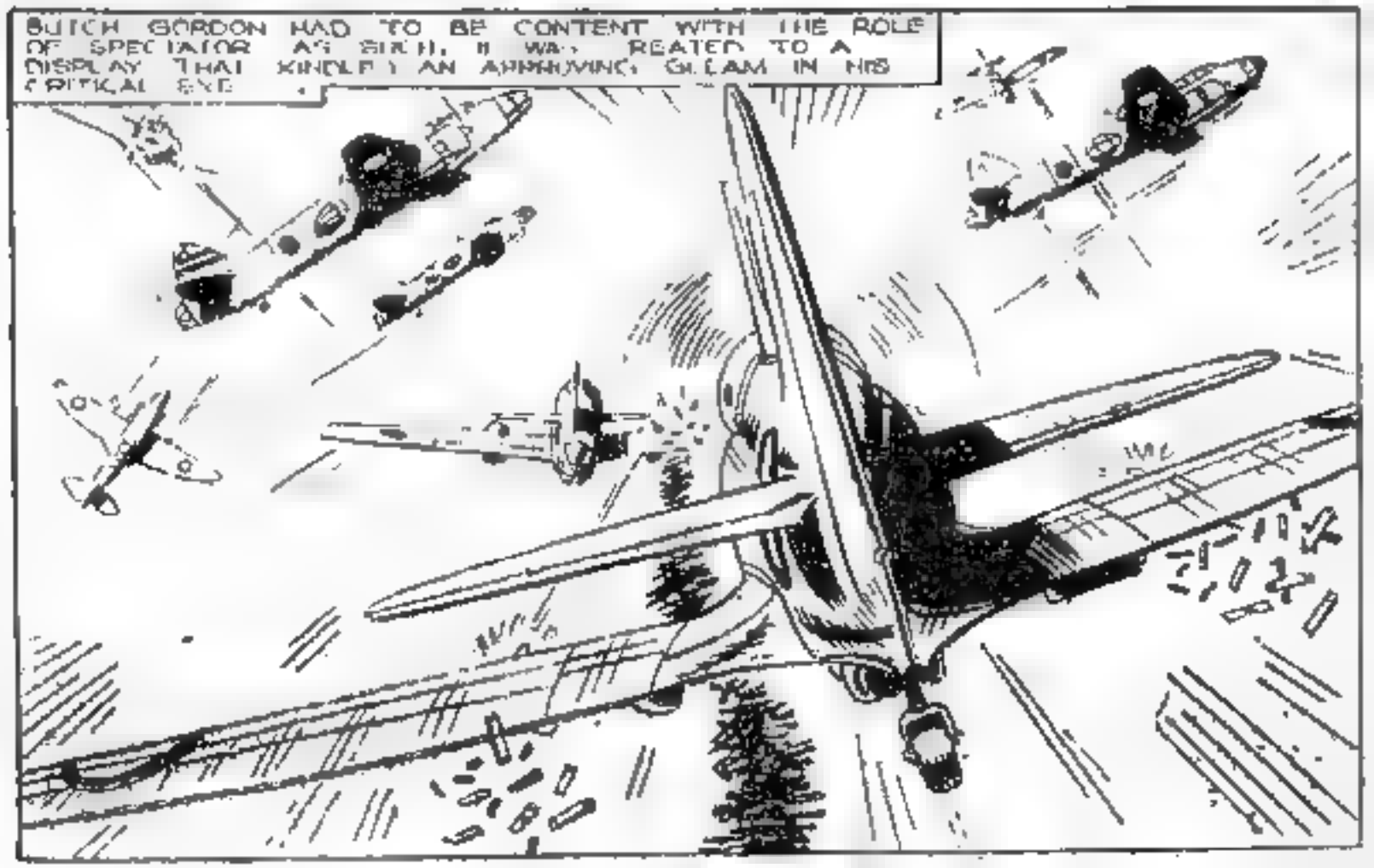
JIM HEARD BUTCH'S SHOUTED INSTRUCTIONS AND HAD TO ADMIT THE YANKEE COLONEL HAD A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF HORSE-SENSE -- EVEN IF HE WAS NO SOLDIER...
DON'T LEAVE THOSE BULLDOZERS OUT IN THE OPEN! ..DRIVE 'EM IN UNDER THE TREES!

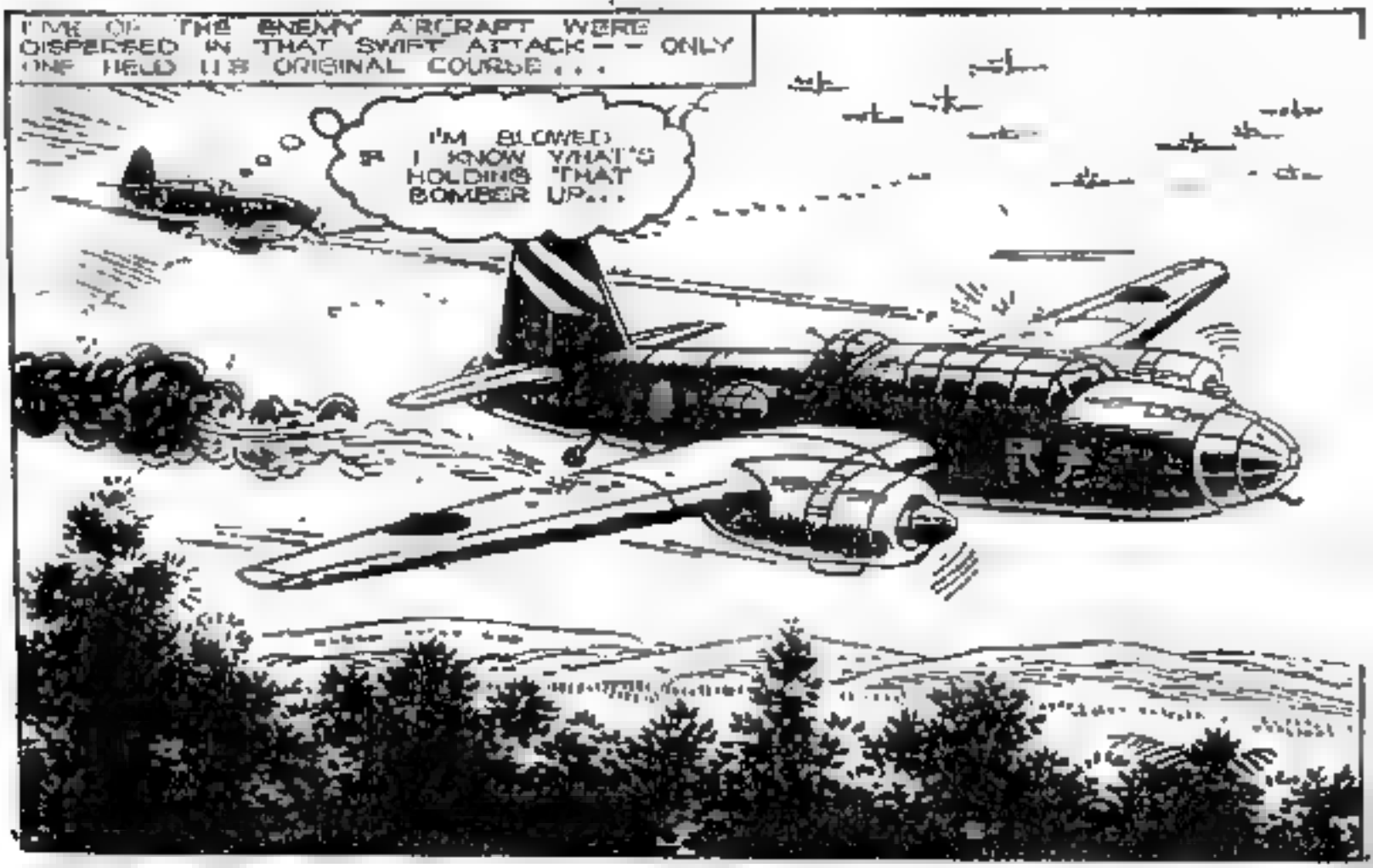
THE JAPANESE PLANES THUNDERED DOWN TOWARDS THE AIRSTRIP— AND EAGER HANDS WERE READY ON THE BRENS WHICH HAD BEEN SITED AROUND THE CLEARING.
BREN-GUNNERS! AIR-CRAFT ACTION! RAPID—FIRE!
LINES OF TRACER WHIPPED AT THE ENEMY MACHINES...
BOY, I'D LIKE TO BE UP THERE WITH A HANDFUL OF FIGHTERS! YOUR BREN-GUNNERS WILL NEVER PULL ANY OF THOSE BABIES DOWN, DAWSON.
MAYBE NOT. IF THEY ONLY THROW THE JAPS OFF THEIR AIM THEN THEY'LL HAVE DONE A GOOD JOB!

NONE OF THE ATTACKING FORMATION WAS DESTROYED, YET EACH AIRCRAFT IN ITS BOMBING-RUN MET A CURTAIN OF FIRE THAT CONFUSED ITS PILOT.
ONLY TWO CRATERS POCK-MARKED THE STRIP WHEN THE LAST PLANE CREW AWAY . . .


LATER IN THE DAY, WHILE BULLDOZERS WERE "IRONING OUT" THOSE TWO CRATERS, A SECOND FLIGHT OF BOMBERS SHOWED UP IN THE EAST. A RECEPTION AWAITED THEM . . .
TALLY-HO! ONE FOR EACH OF US BLOKES! BUSTER!
LT
AF D

SIX SPITFIRES SWEPT IN TO MEET THE ENEMY PLANES IN MORTAL COMBAT. FAR BELOW, MEN WATCHED IN FASCINATION . . .
I GUESS YOU WISH YOU WERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THAT RUCKAS COLONEL
YOU BET DO, SERGEANT SCHENK / I'M SORRY NOW I ELECTED TO COMMAND THE GLIDER DROP.


BUTCH GORDON HAD TO BE CONTENT WITH THE ROLE OF SPECTATOR AS SIRH, II WAS REATED TO A DISPLAY THAT KINDLED AN APPROVING GLEAM IN HIS CRITICAL EYE


FIVE OF THE ENEMY AIRCRAFT WERE DISPERSED IN THAT SWIFT ATTACK — ONLY ONE HELD ITS ORIGINAL COURSE . . .
I'M BLOWED IF I KNOW WHAT'S HOLDING THAT BOMBER UP . . .

THE LONE JAP BOMBER WAS IN TROUBLE, AT THAT. BUT ITS PILOT WAS THE KIND WHO FOLLOWED THE CODE OF BUSHIDO TO THE LETTER. HE WAS READY TO SACRIFICE HIMSELF AND HIS CREW TO ACCOMPLISH HIS MISSION.

THE SACRIFICE WAS WORSE THAN UNAVAILING FOR THAT JAP PILOT AND HIS CREW. ONE OF THE PLANE'S WINGS WAS SEVERED BY A RAIN OF BULLETS. COMPLETELY OUT OF CONTROL, THE BOMBER MISSED THE CLEARING BY A MILE . . .
SPEED UP, DRIVER! SPEED UP! THAT PLANE IS COMING STRAIGHT AT US!

TWO KYUGO TANKS WERE ON THEIR WAY TO THE INFANTRY UNIT WHICH HAD CLASHED WITH JIM DAWSON'S PARATROOPERS. ONE NEVER KEPT ITS RENDEZVOUS!
THE OTHER TANK ARRIVED SHORTLY AFTERWARDS AT THE H.Q. OF THE JAP INFANTRY BATTALION. BEFORE LONG IT WAS SPEARHEADING A DETERMINED ASSAULT-GROUP...
I TOLD YOU I HEARD AN A F.V. SARGE! AND THERE IT IS!
DON'T WORRY. THE COMPANY COMMANDER'S BEEN ON THE BLOWER TO COLONEL JIM. HE'LL HAVE THE ANSWER.

JIM WAS APPROACHING FROM THE REAR AT THAT MOMENT. HE WARNED TO THOSE WORDS THAT REACHED EARS THROUGH THE MIST OF SWEAT.
I'LL HAVE A WORD WITH THAT SERGEANT, LATER, SIR! I'LL GIVE HIM, COLONEL JIM!
NO USE TELLING THIS POKER-BACKED MARTINET I LIKED THE SOUND OF IT HE WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND -- OR APPROVE. BUT HE'S A GREAT R.S.M FOR ALL THAT!

THE FORCE CARRIED A SUPPLY OF ANT TANK GRENADES AND TERRY'S, THE BEST SHOT IN THE BATTALION, HAD VOLUNTEERED FOR THE ROLE OF TANK DESTROYER...
YOU OUGHT'N'T TO BE HERE, YOU KNOW, SIR. YOU SHOULD BE BACK AT YOUR COMMAND POST.
NEVER MIND THAT. SLAP ONE INTO THAT TANK, MISTER TERRIS!

THE R.S.M. FITTED A GRENADE INTO THE CUP-DISCHARGER WITH A GAS-CHECK AT ITS BASE AND THUMPED A BALLISTITE CARTRIDGE INTO THE BREACH OF HIS RIFLE. THERE WAS AN UNHOLY KICK AS HE TRIGGERED THE WEAPON . . .
GREAT WORK! YOU'VE SCORED A BULL, MISTER TERRIER!

IT TOOK A SECOND A/T GRENADE TO BLUDGEON THAT ARMOURED FIGHTING VEHICLE TO A FORLORN STANDSTILL — AND A CONCENTRATION OF SMALL-ARMS FIRE TO BREAK UP THE INFANTRY BEHIND IT . . .

THE FOLLOWING DAYS AND NIGHTS PASSED IN A STATE OF SIEGE, ONLY ENLIVENED BY PATROL ACTIVITY AND SNIPING . . .
I'M WONDERING WHEN THE JAPS WILL HAVE ANOTHER GO AT US. THEY MUST REALISE WHAT WE'RE HERE FOR. THEY'VE GOT TO ACT SOON.
YOU'RE RIGHT. THE STRIP WILL BE READY FOR USE IN LESS THAN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.

STILL SHORT OF REINFORCEMENTS, THE JAPANESE WERE FORCED TO DESPERATE MEASURES
I HAVE RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS BY WIRELESS.- WE MUST DELAY NO LONGER. THE PLAN WE DISCUSSED THIS MORNING WILL BE CARRIED OUT AT ONCE . . .

THE ENEMY STRUCK AT DAWN -- NOT DIRECTLY, BUT WITH FIRE!
WE'VE HAD IT, COLONEL! THERE'S NOTHING FOR IT BUT TO FALL BACK -- ALL THE WAY TO THE CLEARING!
YOU'RE RIGHT, ADJ! BUT IF WE DO THAT, I DON'T SEE HOW IT CAN BE USED AS AN AIRSTRIP -- NOT WITH A PITCHED BATTLE GOING ON THERE!

DISASTER THREATENED THE BOLD PROJECT THAT HAD BEEN WORKED OUT SO HOPEFULLY IN DELHI. YET THERE CAME A SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED INTERVENTION . . .
OKAY, DAWSON! LEAVE THIS TO US!

WITH BUTCH LEADING OPERATIONS, THE BULLDOZERS CARVED A GREAT WEDGE IN THE PATH OF THE ADVANCING INFERNO — A BROAD TRENCH THAT ACTED AS A FIRE BREAK
WE'VE DONE ALL THAT'S NEEDED, BOYS. I GUESS WE'D BETTER BLOW. THE NIPS ARE ACTING KIND OF SPITEFUL.

Printed in England by Messrs. Percy Brothers Ltd., Manchester 1, and published each month by Fleetway Publications Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement Offices: Tallis House, Tallis Street, London, E.C.4. Sole Agents: Australasia, Messrs. Gordon & Gotch Ltd. South Africa, Central News Agency Ltd. Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Messrs. Kingstons Ltd. War Picture Library is sold subject to the following conditions, that it shall not, without the written consent of the Publishers first given, be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of by way of Trade except at the full retail price as shown on the cover; and that it shall not be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of in a mutilated condition, or in any unauthorised cover by way of Trade; or affixed to or as part of any publication or advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever. 1/4/61

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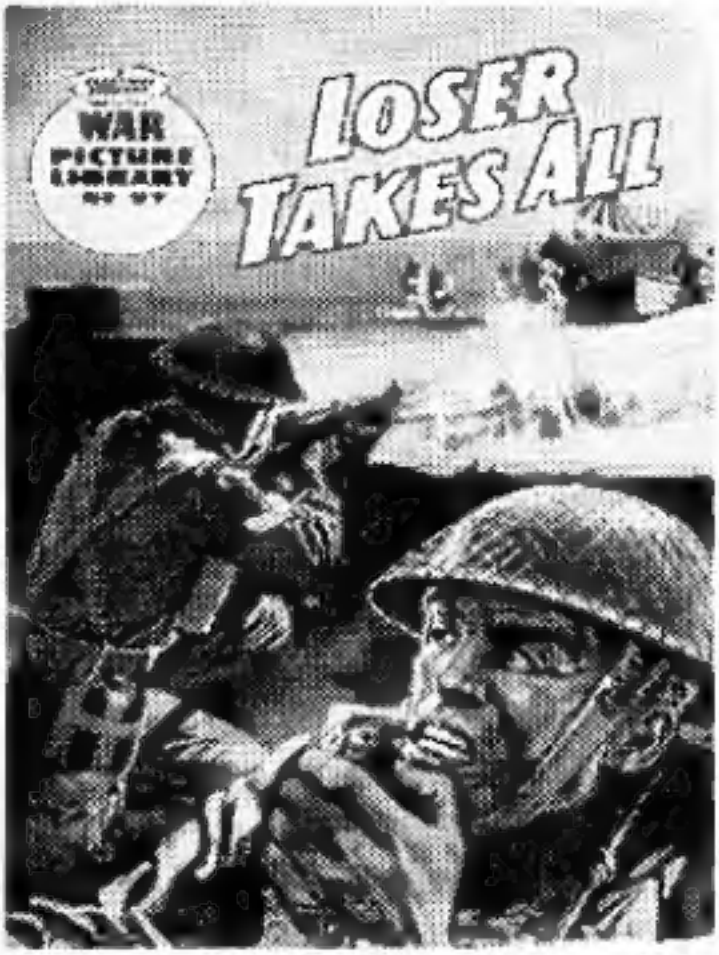
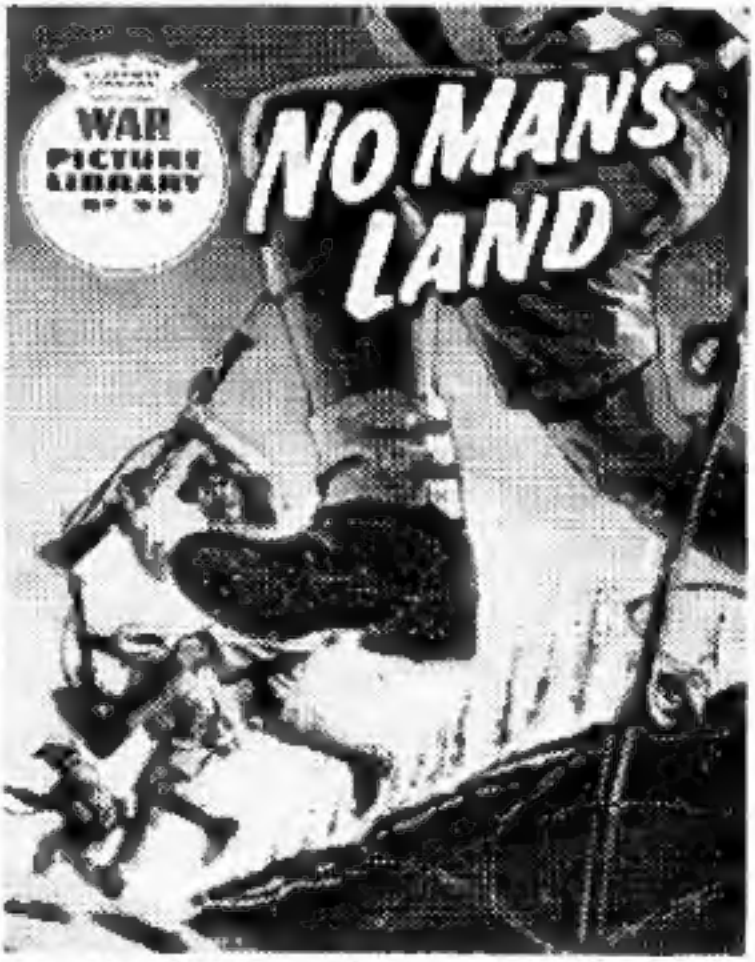


Evil men with the rising sun on their helmets stalked the jungle of New Guinea and the Aussies knew they must kill—or be killed !

No. 98—NO MAN'S LAND



A slender line of men and a few guns faced the armoured might of the Afrika Korps. Those men were doomed—for the guns were dummies !

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